



BACKLASH FAILS TO STOP FEE RISES

BY JACK AVERTY

CANNOCK Chase Council is set to stop funding Christmas lights and increase burial fees and parking charges despite a backlash from residents

The council will include these proposals in its draft budget, along with plans to increase Cannock market hall fees, increase the cost of hiring football pitches and reduce funding for parks and open spaces.

All of these are to be included in its cost-saving plan, despite residents coming out strongly against them in the public consultation process.

More than 70 per cent of residents called for parking charges to stay the same, but they will increase by 10p an hour under the plans.

Just 26.7 per cent of residents said they agreed with putting burial fees up by 20 per cent in the district but they will still increase. Despite taking the feedback on board the council has proposed to make an increase of 15 per cent – five per cent less than the original suggestion rejected by residents.

There was further support for keeping market hall fees the same, with more than 60 per cent of residents disagreeing with an increase, but these will still go ahead.

Opposed

Nearly 60 per cent called for the council to not cut its funding Christmas illuminations but it has kept this in the proposed budget, along with plans to increase football pitch hire by 20 per cent – again a plan opposed by residents.

The council also wants to press ahead with plans to reduce the running costs of parks and open spaces services, opposed by 56 per cent of residents. But as reported by the Chronicle, the council has backtracked certain proposals including plans to cease CCTV and stop floral displays in town centres and on traffic islands.

Council leader Councillor George Adamson said: "The council's cabinet have listened to what members of the public have said and have taken this into account when making their recommendations on what should stay, what should go and any increases that need to be made. Amendments have been made to some of the original proposals, and others, including potentially ceasing the CCTV service, have not been recommended for inclusion."

"However, this is not the end of the process. There is now a further four-week consultation process before the final report is submitted to council for a decision in February 2017."

● Council tax will rise by 3.95 per cent as part of Staffordshire County Council's 'most challenging budget to date'. The move was revealed as the council announced its latest budget proposals. The latest proposals were being discussed by the council's cabinet yesterday (Wednesday) before the full council rubber-stamps the proposals in February.

● Chance – Page 11

JCB WORKERS PLAY SANTA TO HELP FOODBANK



JCB Cab Systems' managing director Dave Carver with representatives from partners DHL, Rugeley Foodbank and Chase Academy Nursery

EMPLOYEES at JCB Cab Systems have dug deep to make a timely Christmas donation to the Rugeley Foodbank.

Dozens of workers at the town's factory donated canned goods, tea and coffee and other products, to be distributed by the charity organisation to needy families and people in crisis.

More than 350 people work at the Riverside factory, making the cab units for most of the diggers and other machines manufactured by JCB.

Many also took part in a prize raffle to win

a mountain bike, which helped to raise nearly £300.

The money was used to buy selection boxes and other Christmas-related items, which were also handed over to foodbank volunteers.

They were joined in their efforts for the food bank by pupils, teachers and parents at the nearby Chase Academy Nursery as well as JCB Cab Systems' logistics partner DHL.

The fundraiser was organised by the JCB Cab Systems management team along with health and safety adviser Lynn Wasylenko

and health and safety co-ordinator Jackie Harper.

Jackie said: "It's fantastic to see how generous everyone has been at JCB Cab Systems, as well as the nursery and DHL."

"We were able to hand over a large package of food and other items just in time to be donated to families at Christmas."

Foodbank co-ordinator Dave Webb said: "I would like to thank everyone at JCB Cab Systems for their kind generosity and thoughtfulness. It's great to see the local community working together."

CRIME

Spirits stolen in burglary at pub

A QUANTITY of spirits was stolen from a Cannock pub when thieves broke in overnight.

The incident happened at the Shoal Hill Tavern, in Sandy Lane, sometime on Thursday night and Friday morning. Police said the burglars got into the premises through a side gate and a window. According to a police spokeswoman, they 'attacked' a safe and stole a quantity of spirits.

Anyone with information which could help police is asked to contact Staffordshire Police on 101 and quote incident number 118 of December 16.

APPEAL

Thank you: 8,500 items are donated

AN incredible 8,500 food items and toiletries have been donated to the Express & Star's Feed a Family This Christmas appeal.

The Chronicle's sister newspaper has been overwhelmed by the kindness of people who have dug deep to help those less fortunate.

Every item will go towards helping families put a much-needed meal on the table. Although the campaign has ended, we are still collecting donations from businesses and other groups.

POLICE

Witnesses plea as man's jaw broken

POLICE are appealing for information after a man was attacked in a bar.

The 24-year-old victim suffered a fractured eye socket, and his jaw was broken in two places, in the incident inside The Shrew, in Market Street, Rugeley.

He was taken by a relative to the Samuel Johnson Hospital in Lichfield before being transferred to the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary. The incident happened some time after 1am on Sunday December 11.

The injured man was discharged from hospital on Thursday.

Contact the police on 101, quoting incident number 746 of 11 December.



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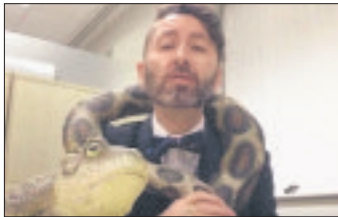
The man who takes a sideways look at life

EVERY SATURDAY

NIGEL HASTILOW

He always tackles the hot topics head-on

Overspending highlighted as pet hate



Damian Carter – ‘know your financial limit’

A MONEY advice expert has employed his ‘pets’ – including a snake and lizard – to encourage people to stick to their limits and avoid a financial Christmas hang-over.

National figures show that 12 per cent of people struggle to make ends meet at this time of year, with Christmas costing on average £750 per person.

The statistics from the Money Advice Trust has prompted Damian Carter, from the Bromford housing association which owns

8,000 homes in Staffordshire and the Black Country, to create a quirky YouTube video to issue top tips to stay in control this festive period.

In it, he dresses up in a tuxedo while holding his pretend pet snake and lizard, encouraging people not to splash out too much cash on their own pets, while also giving advice on how to save in other ways.

He said: “I think there is an expectation nowadays of gift giving at Christmas, but that gift being

Impressed by work behind the scenes

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



THE district is a hive of activity in the lead-up to Christmas.

I’ve had the pleasure of attending plenty of carol concerts, including Staffordshire W1, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Saxon Hill School.

Lichfield Christmas Festival, which extended over two weekends this year, made sure there was always a festive gift, food and drink market, exhibition or activity to enjoy across the city.

Burntwood’s Christmas Festival also offered lots of free activities and was a great way to kick off the festive season.

The Lichfield Garrick continues to delight with their Christmas offering, Sleeping Beauty.

The traditional pantomime has received five-star reviews and is keeping bumper audiences entertained.

As chairman of the district council, I get the chance to visit many organisations and attend events and ceremonies.

I have been especially impressed by the many people and groups who put in so much effort behind the scenes on projects that make a difference to their communities. It makes me feel very proud to represent the district, and I would like to thank everyone for giving up their time and energy to these local causes.

I hope that 2017 is a prosperous and happy year, and I wish you good luck in keeping your resolutions!

Councillor David Salter

Pressure grows for ‘perfection’

ONE in six people in the West Midlands region feel unable to cope at Christmas, according to research by Mind.

The mental health charity found that 16 per cent people feel lonelier at Christmas than any other time of the year, with one in five feeling ‘alone in a crowd’ even if they have people around them.

Part of the problem appears to be overly high expectations, with more than a quarter of people feeling the pressure to have the ‘perfect Christmas’.

Stephen Buckley, Head of Information for Mind, said: “Mind can’t make Christmas perfect, but we can ensure that everyone has the support they need, whether through our helpline or online resources such as our guides for coping with stress.” For more information, go to mind.org.uk/ourchristmas

Festive market days

A FESTIVE street market is being held in Cannock town centre this week, offering a host of Christmas gifts. It began yesterday (Wednesday) and also runs today and tomorrow from 9am to 4pm. Santa will be in attendance at the event.

Pre-drinkers facing a 48-hour streets ban

POLICE have issued a warning that people going on a night out after ‘pre-drinking’ could face a 48-hour exclusion from town centres.

As part of Staffordshire Police’s ‘Safer Xmas Stop and Think’ campaign, extra officers will be patrolling town and city centres to keep them safe for businesses and revellers over the festive period.

Chief Supt Jeff Moore said: “Alcohol unfortunately can be a catalyst for violence and disorder, and we would urge people to Stop & Think – know your limits and drink sensibly. Walk away from anyone vying for an argument or fight.

“We will deal robustly with those few who do become involved in violence or disorder. It is common for people to pre-drink before a night out.

“Remember this means you will be drinking more during the evening, and this extra alcohol can make you more likely to be a victim or an offender.

Pressures

“If you come into a town or city centre already the worse for wear, you risk officers immediately excluding you from the area for up to 48 hours.”

Research by the independent charity Drinkaware, who work to help reduce alcohol misuse, highlights the temptations and pressures for people to drink more during the festive period.

Mr Moore added: “Alcohol reduces our ability to think straight, it narrows our focus of attention, and gives us tunnel vision. If you are under the influence of alcohol, you’re more likely to be a victim or perpetrator of crime, with potentially very serious consequences. We would encourage friends to look after each other and don’t leave anyone in a vulnerable situation.”

Anyone who feels they have a problem with their drinking or drug misuse can find help and support through One Recovery Staffordshire, who operate throughout the county with main sites in Newcastle, Leek, Stafford, Cannock, Burton and Tamworth.

For information about the effects of alcohol, visit www.drinkaware.co.uk

Visit www.staffordshire.police.uk for more information about #SaferXmas

Delight at success of Chase parkrun



Cannock Chase parkrun takes place every Saturday morning

Picture courtesy of Steve Brown

A NEWLY LAUNCHED run on Cannock Chase has received the ‘fantastic accolade’ of being the seventh largest of its kind in the country.

Cannock Chase parkrun started on November 19 and in its first week attracted more than 550 people.

Since the launch, there have been four runs with participants meeting every Saturday at 9am at Marquis Drive to complete a timed 5K.

Every week, more than 35 volunteers from Chasewater Running Club, Chase Harriers, Rugeley Runners and Stafford Harriers give up their morning to help organise the events.

Cannock Chase parkrun is funded by the Chase Community partnership in conjunction with the four local running clubs.

Runners that take part can visit the parkrun’s dedicated website to get results of the races, view photographs and get information about the events.

Councillor Muriel Davis, portfolio leader for health and wellbeing at Cannock Chase Council, said: “What a fantastic accolade to be seventh in the country after just four weeks.

“I am delighted to see so many people taking part – men and women, young and old, people with children in pushchairs and even people with their dogs running – whilst enjoying the beauty

of Cannock Chase. Everyone can take part knowing it’s safe, they have the guidance available from the running club experts and lots of encouragement from fellow runners. Best of all it’s free.”

Councillor Alan White, cabinet member for health, care and wellbeing at Staffordshire County Council, said he was delighted to see so many people taking part in the Cannock Chase park run.

“One of our key priorities as a county council is to help people lead healthier and happier lives and we are keen to see more people more active more often.”

Cannock Chase parkrun will continue weekly. Visit www.parkrun.org.uk/cannockchase for details.

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Quarrying plans get inspector's approval

PLANS to protect local communities and the environment during future quarrying in Staffordshire have been approved by an independent inspector on behalf of the Secretary of State.

The Minerals Local Plan shows how local communities and the environment will be protected and where sand, gravel and other minerals will come from over the next 15 years.

It follows a two-year consultation with local communities and the industry and will now go before a meeting of the full county council in early 2017. If approved, the plan will be put in place up to 2030.

The minerals industry supplies materials for the construction sector and the building of everything from new houses, and schools, to roads.

Councillor Mark Winnington, cabinet member for economic growth, said: "This is an important plan which shows how we will protect our communities and countryside as we manage the extraction of sand, gravel and other natural resources to support the construction industry, our local economy and jobs.

"We've been working on the plan for the last two years, and I would like to thank those individuals and organisations who took part in the various consultations to help us get it right.

"Having the plan is vital. Without it, it would make it difficult to deal with planning applications for new quarries."

People can view the new plan and the independent inspector's report at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/planning

£5m broadband contract boost

HUNDREDS of people in South Staffordshire are set to benefit from a £5.1 million broadband deal.

The contract, between BT and Staffordshire County Council, will see the roll-out of high-speed internet to 6,200 homes and businesses in the county.

Areas to benefit include Halfpenny Green, Codsall Wood and Gospel Ash in South Staffordshire, as well as Prospect Village in Cannock Chase, Moddershall, Tixall and Brocton, near Stafford, and Chorley, Springhill and Wall near Lichfield.

The work starts next year and will run throughout the first half of 2018.

Once finished, it will mean 96 per cent of Staffordshire has access to superfast fibre optic broadband.

The Playthings to play pub gig

PUNK and ska band The Playthings are playing at The Ascot Tavern in Cannock tomorrow (Friday).

Support will be from ukulele band Not Quite Dead Yet. Admission is free, and doors will open about 8pm.

RSPCA in netting alert over trapped fox



The fox had struggled to free itself

THE RSPCA is urging people to put sports netting away after a young fox was left struggling for hours when it got tangled in Cannock.

Overnight the creature got its body wrapped up on fields at Cannock Chase High School, off Hednesford Road. The fox was found the following morning, and the RSPCA was called to rescue the animal.

When an inspector arrived, the fox was weak from struggling for hours to free itself.

It was taken to the RSPCA's Stapely Grange wildlife centre in Nant-

wich, Cheshire, where he was safely released from the net.

Lee Stewart, manager at Stapely Grange, said: "The poor fox was so weak and tired after his ordeal, and he has not eaten anything overnight.

"However, he appeared more alert having been on a drip.

"What this fox went through is a strong example as to why netting can be dangerous to wildlife.

"The fox was very lucky as these sort of incidents can easily be fatal.

"Netting such as goal nets pose a real hazard to our wildlife, and sadly

many wild animals get trapped in them. Far too many animals have to be rescued from sports netting, including birds, hedgehogs and foxes.

"As some of these animals are generally nocturnal, they have normally been trapped and struggling all night and so by the time they are found in the morning, they can have very serious injuries and often need veterinary attention to sedate them and remove all the netting."

The fox was found and rescued on Monday, December 12. No-one from the school was available for comment.

Inspectors tell nursing home it must improve

A NURSING home where people were found lying on the floor has been told to improve in every area by a health watchdog.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has demanded better standards from bosses at Vicarage Court Nursing Home in High Street, Chasetown, with concerns about abuse among a list of criticisms.

Inspectors visited the home, which caters for up to 39 people, unannounced on November 1 and have now published their findings.

Their report said: "We saw there were procedures in place to report concerns of potential abuse to the local authority. However, these procedures were not always followed.

"Records showed that one person had sustained an unexplained injury and another person had been 'found lying on the floor'.

"This incident had resulted in the person requiring an x-ray. A further incident had been recorded where another person had 'been found on the floor'. We spoke with staff, who told us this person could not mobilise independently and did not know how this type of incident may have occurred.

"The staff we spoke with confirmed these had not been reported to the local authority.

Protected

"We discussed this with the manager, and they confirmed that these incidents should have been investigated and possibly reported to the local authority.

"This meant we could not be sure the necessary professionals were informed or that people were suitably protected from potential abuse."

The CQC concluded that the home 'required improvement' overall as well as in every key area including safety, effectiveness, care, responsiveness and leadership.

The watchdog last visited the home in July 2015 and demanded improvements. Following the latest inspection, they said some areas had been addressed while others had not, but the CQC did note positive aspects of care.

The report said: "There were enough staff available to people, and they did not have to wait. People told us staff knew them well and staff received training and an induction that helped them to support people. People's privacy and dignity was upheld. People were encouraged to be independent and make choices about their day." The home will now have to prepare an action plan to address the failings. It did not wish to comment on the report.



Amanda Milling, holding the winning design, alongside Sienna Brindley-Eden, who was presented with a certificate by the Cannock Chase MP

Sienna has the winning design

CANNOCK Chase MP Amanda Milling has announced the winner of her 2016 Christmas card competition.

Earlier in the year, she invited local schoolchildren to design the cover of her official 2016 Christmas card, with the winning design featuring on the front of her card and two runners-up on the back.

"It was exceptionally difficult to choose the winner, with all the entries being very good," Ms Milling said.

"I am delighted to announce that Sienna Brindley-Eden, aged 10, from St Luke's Primary School, was the winner, and her design now features on the front of my Christmas card.

"I thought this picture was striking and encapsulated the magic of Christmas."

The two runners-up were Alek Loock, eight, from West Hill Primary School, and Natasha Williams, six, from Moorhill Primary School.

Ms Milling added: "Both of the runners-up were also fantastic. It was just a shame there could be only one winner."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Be responsible, patients urged

BOSSSES at County Hospital have asked families to use its minor injuries unit only when it is really needed.

Since the unit opened in October - following the temporary closure of the children's A&E amid safety fears - more than 1,100 children have been treated there. However, University Hospital North Midlands NHS Trust, which runs the Stafford hospital, has called on residents to use the unit 'responsibly'.

It says the MIU should be used only for head and limb injuries, wounds, sprains, bruises and fractures.

Reminder to have designated driver

REVELLERS planning their festive nights out are being reminded to nominate a designated driver to make sure they get home safely.

Designated drivers will be rewarded in more than 100 Staffordshire pubs over the Christmas period as part of this year's 'I'll be DES' campaign.

For staying off the booze, they will get free or reduced-rate soft drinks at many of the county's pubs and clubs.

Posters with the message 'Stop & Think: Get your mates home safely this Christmas' will be displayed. Visit www.staffsaferroads.co.uk/i'll-be-des

Get a flu jab - health leaders

HEALTH leaders are urging people with chronic kidney disease to have their free flu jab if they haven't already as winter begins to grip.

Winter illnesses start to circulate nearer Christmas, so Stafford and Surrounds, Cannock Chase and South East Staffordshire and Seisdon Peninsula Clinical Commissioning Groups are calling on patients to get the vaccination as soon as possible.

For more information, visit www.nhs.uk/staywell

Fall in jobless total brings festive boost

JOBLESS figures are down in Staffordshire and the Black Country, in a pre-Christmas boost for the region.

The UK's unemployment rate fell to 4.8 per cent at 1.62 million. In the West Midlands, it fell by 25,000 to 151,000. And there was more good news with the claimant count.

In Staffordshire it fell 170 to 4,920 (0.9 per cent, half the UK average). In Cannock Chase it was down 15 to 710, Lichfield's fell by 10 to 430 and South Staffordshire down by 35 to 695.

Places going fast

THERE are fewer than 50 places left for Stafford's half marathon. Organised by the borough council, the run is on March 19 and nearly 4,000 people have registered for the 13.1-mile race. Next year's capacity of 4,000 runners is up on 2016's 3,500. Runners can enter online at www.staffordhalf.com

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



MORE weather-forecast English. This week's warning was of "murky-mizzly."

A READER says she is disappointed to learn from this column that pansexuality has nothing to do with pans. She was working on her debut novel, *Fifty Shades of Stew*.

WHOPPERS of our time. I heard one pundit describe the brought-forward hike in council tax to pay for social care as "a temporary rise." Yeah, right.

BUT the council tax had to be the target, didn't it? Freezing it for several years had become a totem of Toryism, a buffer protecting the property-rich from the demands of Britain's uncontrollable welfare bill. The real hit will come when Westminster re-bands the nation's homes based on today's inflated values and the most desirable addresses will be in *Much Weeping in the Shires*.

THE curse of predictive texting. A friend and I provided ukulele-and-songs entertainment for a Christmas party under our performing names of Two Old Pluckers. We appeared in the programme as Two Old Plonkers. Our complaint was not upheld.

"EU leaders richly deserved Brexit and British voters were right to give them it." Historian and columnist Niall Ferguson, admitting he was wrong to argue against Brexit and is now relieved to be "back on the right side." There is plenty of time for all you other sinners to repent.



SO farewell, Ian McCaskill. I never interviewed the BBC weather forecaster, who recently died this week, but he suddenly appeared in the office in Broadcasting House many years ago where I was interviewing the chief forecaster, Bill Giles. McCaskill burst in like a busy little shrew, sorting through some papers while robustly denouncing some ****ing **** he had just fallen out with. It was all light-hearted but to hear the housewives' favourite effing and blinding like a navy was a bit of a shock. As I wrote at the time, it was like seeing the Pope spit.

OH, Yuletide foottide. I have invested in a pair of cargo trousers which are not only cheaper than jeans but harder-wearing and look much better on rumps of a certain age. They come with many pockets in which you can lose things. Some pairs have a special pouch for knee pads, which must be very useful when you're begging the kids not to put you in a home.

FIRST cracker of the season: "What happened to the hyena who swallowed an Oxo cube? He became a laughing stock." Ye Gods, another 10 days of this.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Don't let blockages drain away the fun

NOVELTY pants, fluffy slippers and turkey fat are just a few of the items Severn Trent could be clearing from the sewers this Christmas, if previous experience is anything to go on.

As everyone is gearing up for the festivities, engineers from the company are preparing for call-outs to all kinds of blockages. James Jesic, operations manager for Severn Trent, said: "Over the years, we've seen al-

most everything turn up in our sewers, from a pair of Muppets slippers to a big pile of pants and even part of a motorbike.

"While these all cause us issues in the sewers, there's something much worse – fat, oil and grease. Everyone loves to indulge at Christmas time, and you may find your kitchen turning into a factory, churning out endless festive snacks and treats, but

please, please, don't pour hot fat and grease down the sink.

"It might seem harmless when you're doing it, but that grease quickly solidifies when it cools and sticks to the sides of our sewers forming a concrete-like solid that attracts other debris, eventually causing a blockage. With no way through, the waste water backs up the system, coming out of drains and sewers in

roads or even into homes – nobody wants a flooded house."

Millions of pounds of damage is caused each year as blocked drains cause sewer flooding, over 75 per cent of which are preventable.

Severn Trent has launched a Christmas campaign to remind everyone to dispose of fat, oil and grease the right way.

Visit www.stwater.co.uk/fattrap

Counterfeits alert after Facebook goods seized

By David Banner

PEOPLE are being urged to be vigilant and avoid buying counterfeit goods following a seizure of thousands of items in Burntwood.

Staffordshire County Council's trading standards team seized the haul of counterfeit items – including electrical goods and cosmetics – from a rented room.

Other items included fake branded clothes, alcohol and cigarettes. A small quantity of fireworks which had been advertised for sale without the necessary licence and storage inspection was also found in a vehicle at the address.

All of the items were being advertised on Facebook. Two people are now subject to a joint trading standards and police investigation.

The incident has led Staffordshire County Council to issue a warning that counterfeit goods will leave people out of pocket and could cause serious harm.

Vigilant

Communities leader Councillor Gill Heath said: "This seizure comes as a timely reminder in the run-up to Christmas that people need to be aware of the hazards of counterfeit goods.

"Thankfully the goods seized here cannot now end up in people's homes. More and more counterfeit goods are now being sold online, particularly on social media sites, and so people need to be vigilant.

"Counterfeit cosmetics and electrical goods were found at this property, and these in particular can be very dangerous and should be avoided. These items are increasingly hard to detect just to look at, so when something is being sold at a knock-down price, people should be extremely wary. It is always best to buy from reputable traders.

"We always say that if something is too good to be true, it usually is. In addition to damaging Staffordshire businesses, counterfeit goods sales help to line criminals' pockets."

The Burntwood operation took place on Friday, December 9.

Forces tribute card has 17,000 names



Lt Col David Whimpenny, left, chairman of the Arboretum board, and Lt Gen Richard Nugee, Chief of Defence People

A GIGANTIC Christmas card carrying thousands of messages of goodwill has been presented to Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, Chief of Defence People, who received the card on behalf of British Armed Forces.

The presentation took place at Haig House in London, head office of the Royal British Legion, parent charity of the National Memorial Arboretum.

The 2.1m high and 4.5m wide card has toured the UK and was signed at schools, local groups and businesses including Argos, Sainsbury's, Rolls-Royce and Virgin Trains. Members of the public signed the card at the Arboretum during events and were invited to submit contributions online.

In total, the card has amassed more than 17,000 messages giving thanks to the service and sacrifice of

British Armed Forces. Once verification takes place, it is believed that the National Memorial Arboretum will hold a Guinness World Record for "Most contributions to a greetings card", beating the current record of 13,288 held by Dubai Police.

Sarah Montgomery, managing director of the Arboretum, said: "This card is just a small symbol of the deep affection that the public hold for all those who serve and a recognition of the immense debt we owe them."

Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, Chief of Defence People, said: "It's an honour to receive this card on behalf of all the Armed Forces.

"Gestures like this are important to us and highlight just how much support the Forces have from the British public."

'Monster' boyfriend sentenced by court

A VIOLENT boyfriend described as a 'monster' by the woman he controlled and assaulted has been sentenced.

Mitchell Bain, of St James Road, Cannock, was sentenced to 14 weeks in prison suspended for 18 months and ordered to pay £200 compensation and £620 costs. As well as three counts of assault, the 20-year-old window fitter admitted a charge of engaging in controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate relationship.

Cannock Magistrates Court was told that Bain's behaviour included deciding when his girlfriend had a bath, choosing her clothes, stopping her wearing make-up or using social media, and ordering that she send him photos every half an hour while she was out. He also told her he kept a gun in his bedside table.

After one of the three assaults, she went to hospital and received treatment for mild concussion.

After meeting in September 2014, the couple moved in together.

Mrs Maggie Meakin, prosecuting, read out the 20-year-old victim's statement: "You had become a monster," she said.

"You used to make me feel like this was all my fault and I deserved every bruise and knock of my confidence."

Mr Mohammed Khan, defending, told the court that the gun which Bain mentioned was a legally held BB gun.



Mitchell Bain

Help available for water bills

THE charitable trust run by Severn Trent is offering to help hard-up families with financial help to pay their water bills over the festive period.

The Severn Trent Trust Fund (STTF) is running its Big Difference Scheme (BDS) to help those struggling to pay water bills by saving an average of £250 per customer.

The scheme, offered by Severn Trent Water and STTF, aims to help people during the festive period – when there is a danger of debt getting out of control – and start with a clean slate in 2017. Kim Wootton, operations director at STTF, said: "BDS can help all families – you don't have to be unemployed or on benefits."

BDS is available to those who live in the Severn Trent area who are finding it difficult to pay water charges.

Ramblers take time off for celebrations

CHASE Ramblers have announced there is no walk on Christmas Day.

"We wish season's greetings to everyone," a spokesman said. For further information about the group, contact Barry by calling 01543 684254. New walkers are welcome.

Emma Louise

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Appeal in memory of tragic Josh tops £1.5k

MORE than £1,500 has been raised to set up a mental health charity in memory of Staffordshire man Joshua Smith, who committed suicide after a long battle with depression.

Josh's family are hoping to raise £5,000 initially to get the project off the ground, which they say will provide structured support outside of what the NHS offers.

It will feature activities such as horticulture, which the 27-year-old from Stone had enjoyed up until he took his own life on October 25.

Josh was laid to rest earlier this month, and already dozens of people have pledged money to the Friends of Joshua Smith page on Just Giving.

His sister Hannah Buckley said: "After an earlier suicide attempt in 2012, Josh found sanctuary in an allotment, and his passion for horticulture grew from there."

"He also enjoyed walking and reading; these activities helped him to fight his illness."

"We are therefore raising funds to create a registered charity to set up a project in the community that supported Josh through his illness, and has continued to support us as a family since his suicide."

Contest honour for stroke team

STAFFORDSHIRE and Stoke on Trent Partnership NHS Trust's community stroke discharge team have won a national competition for their work in improving care for North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent stroke patients.

The Haywood Hospital-based team support patients and carers upon discharge from hospital following a stroke and provide specialist therapy programmes in their own homes to enable patients to adapt.

The team were recognised in the 2016 Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme (SSNAP) case study competition for their work in using audit data alongside patient feedback to improve patient care by introducing a seven-day service.

International beer festival dates set

THE National Brewery Centre in Staffordshire will play host to the International Festival of Beer next year.

The festival is taking place at the centre in Horninglow Street, Burton upon Trent, from March 10 to 12.

Care staff win top national award



The awards ceremony in London

A SUPPORTED-LIVING service which operates in Wolverhampton, Dudley, Cannock and Worcester has won a prestigious national award.

The service, called Supporting You in the Midlands, won the social care prize in the LaingBuisson awards.

More than 800 delegates from across the health and social care sectors attended the presentation evening in London.

The service's nomination for the social care award was based on feedback from tenants and staff.

They praised how the service im-

proves their ability to enhance their independence.

Over the last 18 months, many people have moved out of the service having been helped by staff to develop the necessary skills to live independently. SYI Midlands provides support to individuals with learning disabilities, autism and/or mental illnesses so they can live as independently as possible.

The service is based in Worcester and is managed by Craegmoor, part of the Priory Group.

Sally Jobling, regional manager of SYI Midlands and South Wales, said:

"Everyone at these services works so hard and they deserve this accolade."

Sarah Hughes, CEO of Craegmoor, said: "Congratulations to everyone who works at SYI Midlands for winning this top award. The service is outstanding in how they go about providing support."

Pictured at the awards evening at Westminster Park Plaza are, from left, SYI operations director Robbie Shanahan, service user Megan Chorley and SYI Midlands and South Wales regional manager Sally Jobling

Rail stations revamp could be put on hold

MULTI-MILLION pound improvements to railway stations in Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley may not happen until beyond 2020 - after the Mill Green designer outlet village is expected to open.

Network Rail said there was no 'active project' to invest in the stations, although bosses admit the platforms do need expanding to accommodate longer trains.

Earlier this month, the Chronicle reported that talks were under way on enhancing the three Cannock Chase sites in time for the opening of the Mill Green complex, which will feature dozens of shops and restaurants. A Network Rail boss has now vowed to get the ball rolling with applications for government funding for longer-term projects in 2020-25.

Meanwhile, Cannock Chase Council is trying to lobby support from the West Midlands Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnerships. Richard Dugdale from Network Rail was delivering an update on the Chase Line electrification project when he declared that improving stations was not part of the work.

Better

He said the new passenger trains - set to go live as early as 2018 - would have a minimum of three carriages in response to current concerns about overcrowding. Mr Dugdale said he would ideally like to see six-carriage trains but the current stations on the route could not accommodate that many coaches.

He said: "When you provide a better service, people will flock to it. It will be a victim of its own success. If we were to plan for four platforms, we might as well make it a six-car platform - that is my view. There is not currently a project in place to do that."

"But there would be no point extending the platform at Cannock to make it longer, when platforms elsewhere remain short. I know developers and the council are in discussions about some sort of improvement scheme. It is not part of the electrification project."

Councillor Maureen Freeman said: "The stations are ancient across our district. Cannock station is in a very bad state, and we have to move on here because we have got the new village coming. Hednesford and Cannock will not be inviting to passengers coming in and wanting to come down to the new village." Mill Green, which will feature up to 130 outlets, is expected to cost £115m and open in 2019.

Panto in memory of crash victim



Scott Bagnall, as Silly Bill, Ed Smith (Pricilla the Goose), Laura's mother Lisa, and Oliver Bennett (Mother Goose)

A THEATRE group has put on a free pantomime in memory of a teaching assistant who was killed in a car crash.

Creative Stage Productions, based in Stafford, performed Mother Goose at Great Haywood's Village Hall with all proceeds supporting the Little Laura charity set up following the death of Laura Thomas in July 2013.

The 20-year-old was killed when her broken-down car was hit by an HGV on the A5. Her fiancé Lewis Pagett from Rugeley was badly injured. The performance

proved a great success, raising £619.36 through ticket sales and a photo booth.

Laura, from Great Haywood, was a teacher at Marshlands Special School where a garden is being made. The money raised from the panto will be put towards the project. Afterwards, Laura's mother Lisa said: "They said if we provided the venue and sold the tickets, then they would do the show for free."

The lorry driver who killed Laura had been looking at a dating website. Ian Glover, then 44, was jailed for five years.



Laura Thomas

NEWS IN BRIEF

Schools fail to hit SATS benchmark

PRIMARY schools in Staffordshire have fallen well below the national benchmark for pupil achievement in SAT tests, according to new figures.

Across the county, 53 per cent of 11-year-old pupils reached the required levels in reading, writing and maths. Staffordshire came joint 82nd in the national league table, matching Wolverhampton. But the result was well below the Government's expected standard of 65 per cent.

Sandwell was 105th on 51 per cent, Walsall came equal 118th (50 per cent) and Dudley joint 122nd (49pc).

Over-50s relying on auction sites

RESEARCH has shown that more than half of over-50s in the Midlands are turning to auction sites to bring in extra cash.

The research from specialist lender and savings bank Aldermore found an increasing number of new businesses are being started by the over-50s.

According to the research, over-55s are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, with just over a fifth saying they need to generate extra income due to high living costs.

A total of 56 per cent generate extra income from selling on websites.

'Stock up now' on medication

HEALTH chiefs are reminding patients to be prepared and stock up on medication before the festive break.

Many GP practices and pharmacies will have limited opening hours between Christmas and New Year, so Stafford and Surrounds, Cannock Chase and South East Staffordshire and Seisdon Peninsula Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are advising those with long-term conditions to order and collect their repeat prescriptions in plenty of time.

Spectacular display lights up cathedral

LICHFIELD Cathedral is being brought to life with a spectacular festive illumination show that sees native-themed projections played across the west front of the building.

Until tomorrow (Friday) ticket holders can view a display every 30 minutes from 6.30pm to 8pm, then take a journey through the cathedral to experience the nativity, walk through a display of Christmas trees and finally see 10,000 angels suspended from the ceiling in the South Transept.

Thief grabs car stereo

A CAR'S stereo system was stolen after a thief broke into the vehicle in Burntwood. The incident happened in Cedar Grove between 1.30pm and 3pm on Sunday, December 11. Anyone who has information about the theft has been asked to call Staffordshire Police with details on 101.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Anyone got a spare library to give away?

THE Black Country Living Museum is looking for an unused former library to add to its open-air village.

Something tells me that in the current climate they won't have to look too far to find one.

And there will be a nice art gallery and a few swimming pools available soon . . .

□ □ □

INTERESTINGLY, one of the reasons given by Dudley Council for closing swimming pools is the declining number of people who use them.

Now that I can well believe. Indeed, I used to be a regular user of the pool at Dudley Leisure Centre until 11 years ago or so, when I stopped going altogether. Why? Because they stopped opening to the general public in the evening, to accommodate a swimming club from another centre they had closed.

□ □ □

A POLL in our sister paper the Express & Star found that 75 per cent of readers think shops should be banned from opening on Boxing Day.

As something of a libertarian, I'm not a fan of banning many things. But then I think back to the days when I used to work Boxing Day, and the distraction of the inconsiderate shoppers who not only considered it their inalienable right to park on our office car park near a well-known shopping mall, but also to climb over the fence next to the window just to get to the shops more quickly.

Can you imagine how annoying that used to be?

Does anybody really need to go shopping that badly?

Still if 75 per cent of the population want Boxing Day shopping banned, then maybe the shopping malls will be deserted on December 26.

Either that, or our readers are far more sensible than the rest of the population.

□ □ □

THE Football Association is "out of balance", filled with "elderly white men" and in desperate need of reform.

So say four, er, elderly white men, who all used to be senior executives of the FA before stepping down for one reason or another.

Greg Dyke, David Bernstein, David Davies and Lord Triesman want the Government to step in and add impose a bit of diversity into the mix. Yippee, never mind Brexit, let's nationalise football.

I suspect if you did a straw poll of most fans about what is wrong with football, the main bugbears would probably revolve around there being too much money in the game, too much of it going to a cartel of half a dozen clubs dotted around London and the north-west, and the persistent under-achievement of the national team.

I bet not one of them would be calling for a task force headed by John Major or Gordon Brown.



LICHFIELD: Cbeebies' Rebecca Keatley as Fairy Moonbeam



CANNOCK: Daisy The Cow with Shorelle Hepkin



STAFFORD: Seren Sandham-Davies with Michael Hamway

Stages are set for a huge barrel of laughs

Panto season's here. Oh no it isn't. Oh yes it is. **HEATHER LARGE** looks at the region's line-up of festive productions

LOUD, proud and frighteningly funny – theatres are welcoming dames of all descriptions as the festive season gets in full swing.

Christmas really just wouldn't be Christmas without a traditional afternoon or evening out to watch a pantomime. For many it's a highlight of the festive season – a chance to relax and have a giggle with friends and family.

Venues are gearing up to welcome record crowds as theatregoers flock to book their tickets to watch productions of popular favourites – Aladdin, Dick Whittington, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk.

Packed

There is an array of productions ranging from those on the doorstep to venues a bit further afield. Some shows are already under way and many are running throughout the festive season.

Pantomime season is the most important of all for most theatres as they boast packed houses. They welcome audiences of all ages, including many people who are making their only visit to the theatre since last year.

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, the Prince of Wales Theatre in Cannock, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Lichfield Garrick and Birmingham Hippodrome are among the Midland venues promising plenty of fun for all ages.

■ ■ ■

THE magical tale of Jack and The Beanstalk will be brought to life at Cannock's Prince of Wales Theatre. Shorelle Hepkin, of CBBC's Wolfblood, stars as the fairy while Keith De'Winter will be returning as Dame Dolly.

A fully professional cast will be ably supported by the Studio 5 Dancers from Rugeley when performances get under way today



CANNOCK: Karl Greenwood as Silly Billy. Josh Down as Jack, and Keith De'Winter as Dame Dolly

(Thursday). The production runs until December 30. Audiences can follow the story of Jack as he trades Daisy the cow for magic beans that magically grow into a giant beanstalk. Climbing the stalk, Jack discovers a giant's castle full of treasures including a magical harp and a hen that lays golden eggs. But, asleep in his castle is the wicked giant.

Will Jack escape the giant's clutches and make his fortune? Speaking at the launch earlier this year, theatre manager Richard Kay, who has been involved with panto at the venue for the past 30 years, said he expected it to be a night of fun and laughter.

"The Prince of Wales Centre is delighted to be working with PMA Productions for the 16th consecutive year," he said. "We pride ourselves on ensuring traditional panto with all the usual ingredients of music and laughter and lots and lots of audience participation."

Performances take place at 2pm and 6.30pm. Tickets are £16 for adults and £14

for concessions. A family ticket is available for £52. To book tickets, call the box office on 01543 578762, or visit www.princeofwales.live

■ ■ ■

CBEEBIE'S Rebecca Keatley is among the stars on stage in this year's pantomime at The Lichfield Garrick.

The television presenter is playing Fairy Moonbeam in Sleeping Beauty – The Pantomime of Dreams, and Sutton Coldfield actor Sam Rabone joins the cast as Lichfield's new dame.

Author Ian Billings has taken on the role of the King, after a successful run in Telford Place Theatre's annual pantomime, and children's entertainer Ben Thornton plays Jangles.

This year's production promises lots of audience participation, lavish sets and stunning special effects – there is even a fire-breathing dragon. It's been billed as the venue's 'funniest and most magical pantomime ever'. Keat-

ley, who is the star of Let's Play and Time For School, described it as 'spellbinding'.

Rabone, who performed as Nurse Nellie in Yeovil's production of Sleeping Beauty last year, said: "I'm over the moon to play the dame at the Lichfield Garrick!"

"Having travelled the country from Scotland to Somerset, Lichfield is only a stone's throw away from my hometown of Sutton Coldfield. People of Lichfield, be prepared to see a show with more laughter than ever before."

Sleeping Beauty is the first pantomime at the Lichfield Garrick to be co-produced with Evolution Productions, which is led by television presenter Paul Henley. He said: "We are absolutely thrilled that Rebecca Keatley and Sam Rabone have agreed to appear in Sleeping Beauty. Rebecca is immensely popular with young children; she is funny, quirky and loveable – the perfect fairy."

The show runs until December 31. Tickets are from £22 for adults and £13 for children. There are a variety of school, matinee and evening performances. To book call 01543 412121 or visit www.lichfieldgarrick.com

■ ■ ■

AUDIENCES can tap their toes and sing their hearts out at this year's rock 'n' roll inspired show at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre.

After breaking box office records with Jack and the Beanstalk, this time it's the story of Aladdin which is being brought to life.

It's time for celebrations in Old Shanghai as the Emperor hosts a party to celebrate the engagement of his daughter to the mysterious and slightly suspicious Abanazer. But families will be left wondering if the Emperor and Princess really trust him?

The panto's hero Aladdin meets the Princess on the street and falls for her instantly, but knows a penniless boy like him could never marry a princess. When Aladdin goes on an adventure with his best friend Cuddles the Monkey could the discovery of a magic lamp really turn his fortunes around?

Aladdin – the Wok 'n' Roll Panto opened with a dedicated schools performance and continues until January 8.

To book, call the box office on 01785 619080 or visit www.staffordgatehousetheatre.co.uk

● The Fast Ticket – Page 17

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Supporting others at Christmas

SI Cannock & District

THROUGHOUT the year Cannock Soroptimists have supported the Pathway Project by fundraising. They also provide comfort bags and household items which are appreciated by the women who have left their homes with nothing.

This year, Cannock SI President Carole Holdercroft chose Pathway as her charity, having been involved with supporting them for 23 years.

As Christmas approaches and the members of Cannock Soroptimists prepare to buy gifts for family and friends, they do all they can to think about others less fortunate to enable them to enjoy Christmas too.

Recently, members generously provided Christmas gifts such as clothing, beauty packs, toys and games for women and children who will be spending Christmas in the refuge run by the Pathway Project for women victims of domestic violence.

Some members of SI Cannock recently attended the Pathway AGM – it is the project's 25th anniversary year.

The members were deeply moved to hear harrowing stories from the women who are domestic violence victims. The stories heard reiterate the need to continue to support these women and their children in any way possible.

To donate a gift, call Cannock Soroptimists on 07971 494510 or email si.cannock@outlook.com – all gifts will be very much appreciated.

Arresting talk on a life in police force



Lynne Moseley, Maurice Cryer, Eileen Cryer, Linda Sanders and Jackie Shepherd

CANNOCK Chase Ladies' Probus Club held their November Luncheon at The Barns.

Chairman Eileen Cryer greeted everyone, with a special welcome to two prospective new members, Christine Ballett and Sheila Morris, who came along as visitors.

Mrs Cryer said she had great pleasure in inducting three new members, Lynne Moseley, Linda Sanders and Jackie Shepherd. These new club members will bring the total of new members this year to 12.

Anne Bint said Grace after which the ladies enjoyed their luncheon.

After the Loyal Toast a short business meeting was held. The chairman introduced her husband Maurice, who gave an interest-

Cannock Chase Ladies Probus Club

ing talk about his life as a police sergeant in Staffordshire Police Force. Pat Elwell gave the vote of thanks for such an entertaining talk.

Eileen brought the afternoon to a close and wished the ladies a safe journey home.

The club meets on the last Thursday of each month at the Barns. Friendship and Fellowship, over a splendid meal, is the order of the day. Membership enquiries to be made to the secretary Norma Hutchinson on 01543 505183.

Village hall braskets display

MEMBERS were divided into teams of four and presented with an assortment of strange articles.

Bob and Del Neill had acquired these over many years and the contest was to ascertain the identity and use for each one.

These varied from a cherry stone remover to a

The Ridwares WI

ring for a bull's nose. The competition was to bring 'an unusual object' which was won by Helen Sharp with her antique cream maker.

Many members had attended the Group Meeting at Colton village hall and were roundly entertained

by Lesley Smith's interpretation of Boudicca.

The WI planted up some pink bras with an assortment of plants (braskets) and displayed them outside the village hall in support of Breast Cancer Awareness.

The December meeting will be the Christmas party night at Hawkesyard.

Wishing you all a...

Merry Christmas

and a Happy New Year from Liz and the Team!

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Care group planning trip thanks to donation

BURNTWOOD Breast Care is celebrating after receiving a £300 donation from the Galaxy Hot Chocolate Fund.

Founded in 2009, the group is bound together by the shared experience of facing breast cancer diagnosis.

The group now has 30 active members who provide a support system for one another and take part in various events together.

Event manager Linda Griffith said: "This donation from the Galaxy Hot Chocolate Fund means that we can now treat our lovely members to a fun day out together enjoying afternoon tea. It will help stop them from worrying about illness and brighten up their day with some good old-fashioned fun!"

Galaxy Hot Chocolate is looking to help small, local community projects, groups and charities across the UK and Ireland.

Michelle Frost, spokeswoman for Galaxy Hot Chocolate, said: "From our research, we know that across the UK and Ireland, smaller charities and community groups are struggling to make ends meet despite the efforts of a huge number of warm-hearted volunteers. Seventy per cent of charities and organisations report that 51 to 100 per cent of funds come from fundraising, with a further 68 per cent stating that finding funds has become ten times harder over the past five years."

FOCUS ON BURNTWOOD

Parking at health centre is 'under severe pressure'

PARKING facilities at Salters Meadow Health Centre are under severe pressure, according to County Councillor Sue Woodward.

The issue is adding to the pressures on local care services as people with mobility problems are finding it difficult to park for appointments at the centre at Sankey's Corner in Burntwood, she says.

By Simon Stone

Councillor Woodward recently wrote to NHS Property Services and then, with district councillor Diane Evans, met NHS property manager Andy Coburn on site to demonstrate the problems being experienced.

In the past, patients at the centre have used nearby car parks, including the former Sevens wine bar next door, but these are in private ownership, have recently been resurfaced and are currently fenced off.

A lease for use by centre staff is being negotiated by the NHS while a solution for patients' parking is worked out. But things are becoming 'critical', Councillor Woodward said.

"This is just part of a wider problem around Sankey's Corner as people struggle to park but it's particularly critical at the health centre because missed appointments have to be rearranged to allow people access to the care they need," she added. Dis-

cussions have taken place with businesses using the car park at the health centre and car park use has been monitored showing that spaces are being 'misused'.

NHS Property Services are also trying to 'prevent ongoing trespass' by businesses which they say 'has added to the congestion and health and safety concerns'.

"Some of the solutions suggested, such as an entry barrier, will just add to difficulties in my view," Councillor Woodward added.

"Mr Coburn undertook to discuss the wider problems with the manager of Sankey's Corner Shopping Centre to try to come up with a more sympathetic scheme, rather than simply installing expensive parking systems or engaging a parking management company.

"In the meantime, I would urge local drivers to park more considerately and not block parking for others."



Sue Woodward outside Salters Meadow Health Centre – and parking signs

Make sure you're on register

THE new electoral register for Lichfield District was published on December 1.

Throughout October and November, the district council contacted local households to make sure all those who are eligible to vote are on the electoral register. As a result, most people are registered.

Anyone who has not registered to vote should do so now to make sure they don't lose out. Not being registered means you can't vote and it can affect your credit rating.

To register, visit www.gov.uk/register2vote

You will need your National Insurance number to hand as well as your date of birth. If you do not have access to the internet, call 01543 308125.

The next elections in the district are on May 4, 2017 when eligible voters will be asked to elect their local county councillor.

Swimmers to help hospice

FRIARY Grange Leisure Centre in Lichfield will donate some of its swimming pool takings from today (Thursday) to St Giles Hospice.

All but 50p of the admission price will be donated to the charity.

From fun with inflatables and floats to lane swimming, there are six sessions to choose from on the day.

There is no need to book a session – just turn up and swim.

Christmas Waste and Recycling Collections

There will be changes to your collections over the festive period



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Normal Collection Day....

Mon 26th
Tue 27th
Wed 28th
Thur 29th
Friday 30th

Will be collected on....

Sat 24th
Wed 28th
Thur 29th
Friday 30th
Saturday 31st

Normal collection days until
Friday
23rd Dec 2016

Normal Collection Day....

Mon 2nd
Tue 3rd
Wed 4th
Thur 5th
Fri 6th

Will be collected on....

Tue 3rd
Wed 4th
Thur 5th
Fri 6th
Sat 7th

Normal collections will recommence
Monday
9th Jan 2017



For more information tel **01543 462621** or visit www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/wasteservices

Search for 'Cannock Chase Life'

@CannockChaseDC

www.youtube.com/CannockChaseDC

Work is forging ahead on £126m car parts factory

THESE photographs show how work on a £126.3 million factory at Four Ashes is steaming ahead before next year's opening.

A 50,000 square metre manufacturing unit costing £56.3m is being built for Spanish automotive parts supplier Gestamp, which said it will become a more efficient, competitive and customer-focused site for nearby clients.

They include BMW, Honda, JLR, Nissan-Renault and Toyota. It will employ 800 staff at the base, moving employees from Cannock, and then spending £70m kitting out the factory. It is intended that production of car chassis and body parts will start before the end of 2017.

The project has been supported by Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Staffordshire County Council and Cannock Chase Council.

Part of Gestamp's base in Cannock may be retained for training and development requirements.

Gestamp bought the former ThyssenKrupp Tallent plant – formerly



The full expanse of the factory site
Pictures: O'Brien Contractors



A close-up reveals more details of the progress which is being made

Tallent Automotive and Albion Pressed Metal – in 2011. Major work is being completed by O'Brien Contractors, which last month bagged a second contract to build at the site from the principal contractor Readie Construction.

At the time, O'Brien's Peter O'Brien, said: "We have an excellent track record of delivering civil engineering ser-

vices across the Midlands and, as with all our schemes, our team will approach the project in a flexible manner, offering cost and efficiency savings to ensure we deliver the best results for our client." Staffordshire County Council gave the go ahead for the next phase of the works at the Bericote Four Ashes site in November.

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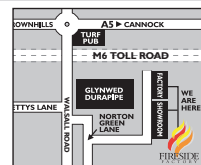
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£275k invested in new press

STAFFORDSHIRE-BASED label printing specialist Paramount Labels has invested £275,000 in a digital label press equipped with the latest UV inkjet technology to compliment a £1 million expansion plan at its print manufacturing headquarters.

Back in 2008, Paramount Labels built on humble beginnings and a basic flexographic printing press at its Cannock headquarters.

Today, the vision to provide a cost-effective, versatile and high-quality label printing service to businesses of all sizes still has

not changed. The addition of the new digital press alongside the existing flexographic machines offers the opportunity to create millions of bespoke labels for some of the most prestigious brands in Europe.

Paramount Labels managing director Phil Wright said: "We'd been looking at various presses for the past year and decided that UV inkjet is the future."

"We'd known Dantex for a long time and we also like the idea of buying British, and Dantex is made in the UK."

Another chance to comment on spending plans

RESIDENTS have just over three weeks to comment on Cannock Chase Council's proposals for its budget. A 'savings options report' drawn up after an initial six-week consultation was approved by the authority's cabinet at their meeting last Thursday.

The report followed feedback from residents, stakeholders and members of the community on the council's Financial Recovery Plan. There will now be a further consultation for the public to view the recommendations the cabinet have made and have their say on the overall budget for the next three years.

Company is boxing clever for Christmas



MD Karl Willis, left, with Steve Sargeant from Barclays

A PACKAGING firm in Rugeley is thinking outside the box after securing a £1.8 million funding package from Barclays to support its continued growth.

Lyburn Supplies, based at Trent Valley Trading Estate, is a family-owned packaging and distribution business that was established in 1989. It has enjoyed rapid expansion, now employing 16 staff and with aspirations to reach turnover of £10 million within the next three years.

Lyburn Supplies' managing director Karl Willis said: "We currently distribute around three million boxes and associated packaging products a month from our premises in Rugeley but Christmas is a vital period for the business, accounting for approximately 35 per cent of our annual turnover as demand for food packaging ramps up."

Steve Sargeant, Barclays relationship director, said: "By really understanding the business and the industry sector, Barclays has been able to deliver a funding package to support all of Lyburn Supplies' working capital requirements."

Jobs boost at Screwfix

SCREWFIX is set to deliver hundreds of jobs in Staffordshire after signing on the dotted line for a new £50 million distribution centre.

The power tools, plumbing and hardware company already has a major warehouse at Stafford employing hundreds of staff.

Now, up to 700 jobs will be created at the new site – a purpose-built 562,000 sq ft warehouse at Prologis Park, Fradley.

Work is due to start this month and should be completed by October next year.

Council to decide on planning proposals

PLANNING applications received by Lichfield District Council include:

45 Fair Lady Drive, Burntwood – first-floor extension over garage to form en suite.

52 Lichfield Road, Burntwood – two-storey side extension to form garage at ground-floor level and one bedroom at first-floor level, single-storey rear extension to extend kitchen.

The Nursery, Overton Lane, Hammerwich – two-storey extensions to either side of existing building, creating first-floor level and widening of existing building, creating gable ends either side.

New House Farm, Hall Lane, Hammerwich – erection of outbuilding to form livestock shed.

Brooklands, New Road, Armitage – erection of two timber storage huts.

Comments must be received by January 2.

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Oven
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Functions
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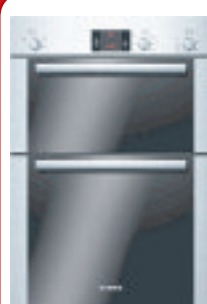


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Functions
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Slide&Hide Oven
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Functions
71 Litre Capacity
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Quick Wash
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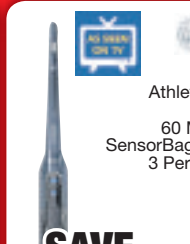
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*Merry Christmas from the
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Police dog Jax sniffs out suspects



Jax - 'brilliant job'

TWO teenagers were arrested thanks to the tracking of Jax the police dog.
The 16-year-old male had failed to stop for police in the white panel van they were driving, having previously stolen it from an address in Bloxwich. They abandoned the vehicle in Hemlock Way, Cannock, before trying to run off.
Staffordshire Police dog Jax was called in, and she quickly detained one of the youths and after 30 minutes found the second hiding in a shed.
When officers examined the van, they found a quad bike which had been stolen during a

burglary at the garage of a house in Cannock. The teenagers were arrested on suspicion of burglary, theft, dangerous driving and taking a vehicle without the owner's consent. They were later released on bail pending further inquiries.
Dog handler Pc Matt Butterworth said: "Jax did a brilliant job on the night. A dog's ability to sniff out offenders is highly developed."
Sgt Emily Lennox, of Cannock's Local Policing Team, said: "Dogs are such an asset when offenders have decided to try to make off on foot."
The incident happened on December 6.

MP seeks pledge over town's future economy

AMANDA Milling has sought assurances from the Prime Minister that the Government's industrial strategy will help boost Rugeley's economy.

The Cannock Chase MP said: "Rugeley has a really bright future ahead, but only if we are ambitious in our redevelopment plans."

In response, Theresa May said: "We will be producing a modern industrial strategy that will show how we can encourage the strengths of the UK and deal with our underlying weaknesses."

Ms Milling has previously raised the need to get the redevelopment of the Rugeley B Power Station site right.

As well as the power station site, several other locations will become available in Rugeley in the coming years, offering 'significant redevelopment land' across the area, she says.

The MP wants all sites to be looked at together to ensure the best possible plan for Rugeley can be developed.

Create

Ms Milling raised Rugeley's prospects in Prime Minister's Questions in light of the Government's plan to introduce an industrial strategy, which Mrs May launched earlier this year when taking office.

Ms Milling added: "The Prime Minister introduced plans to create an industrial strategy in the summer."

"This is timely as I believe it will help create the framework and conditions for the regions, and in our case, Cannock Chase and, more specifically, Rugeley, to plan for developing a sustainable local economy, one which creates highly skilled jobs and therefore opportunities and prosperity for future generations."

"I believe that it is essential that we work together nationally, regionally and locally to implement a strategic and visionary plan which takes account of the growth in new industries and technologies, and sectors of growth."

"If we don't, it would be a tragic failure for future generations."

As a member of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee, the MP recently spoke in detail about the role that the Government's plans could play in developing a strategic framework for Rugeley in a debate about industrial strategy.

Anna to provide inspiration



Cheslyn Hay students Sophia Clark, left, and Kiera Morgan, right, with former Paralympian ski racer Anna Turney

TWO pupils from Cheslyn Hay Sport & Community High School have been selected to take part in a scheme with a world-class athlete mentor.

Kiera Morgan and Sophia Clark have been chosen for the AQA Unlocking Potential programme, run by exam board AQA and the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust. They will be mentored by former Paralympian ski racer Anna Turney.

The school is one of 28 on this year's programme, selected from 100 applicants.

AQA Unlocking Potential provides mentoring for young people aged 14 to 19 who have faced personal challenges or disadvantages.

Students are paired with specially trained mentors who have competed at world-class sporting events - including the Olympics and Paralympics - and have overcome their own significant personal challenges.

Anna Turney will provide personal mentoring for the students over eight months to help unlock hidden attitudes and skills.

Louise Millward, aspiration coordinator at Cheslyn Hay, said: "This is a great programme with truly inspirational mentors who will guide the girls to complete a community project in their area and increase their confidence for the future."

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Ian Adams' superb Widow Twankey wore a succession of outrageous costumes that seemed to defy gravity



Most of the laughs come courtesy of Adam C Booth as Aladdin's brother, the accident-prone Wishee Washee

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And a star is born . . . she yam what she yam-yam but 'lazy' Doreen Tipton comes close to stealing the show as the Empress of China. Apparently she had to apply for the

REVIEW

Empress job to keep her benefits and was rather dismayed to get the gig. Sometimes it means she has to get up before 2pm or miss the Jeremy Kyle show.

With a Black Country accent so thick it could plug the cut, she was an instant hit with panto-goers. And I suspect Gill Jordan's comic creation will be in demand in panto land (at least in the West Midlands) for years to come.

Joe McElderry is a suitably handsome and dashing Aladdin, and those who saw him on The X Factor, Popstar To Operastar or on stage in Joseph know he has an excellent

singing voice. Further fine vocals come from Britain's Got Talent finalist Lucy Kay as Princess Jasmine and Neal Wright as an American-accented Genie of the Lamp.

Most of the laughs come courtesy of Adam C Booth as Aladdin's brother, the accident-prone Wishee Washee, and Ian Adams' superb Widow Twankey.

The scene where the pair get shrunk in the wash was priceless. As Aladdin's washer woman mom, Adams wore a succession of outrageous costumes that seemed to defy gravity.

And all three of the Twankeys did defy gravity on a stunning magic carpet scene in which Aladdin loops the loop over the heads of a marvelling audience.

Stefan Pejic's Abanazar is an eminently hissable villain in the booming Tom Baker mode, gold-clad Lisa Riley makes for a wisecracking ballroom-dancing Slave of the Ring and CBeebies favourite Ben Faulks is the slapstick PC Ping Pong. Add a troupe of energetic dancers and a soundtrack full of pop and showtune favourites, and you've got one Christmas cracker of a show.

It's on at the Grand until January 22.

LEON BURAKOWSKI



A star is born... she yam what she yam-yam but 'lazy' Doreen Tipton comes close to stealing the show as the Empress of China



Neal Wright as an American-accented Genie of the Lamp

Snowbody could better this duet

THE Snowman returns to Birmingham Repertory Theatre in the New Year to delight young and old alike from January 11 to 15, with its wonderful mix of storytelling, spectacle, music and magic.

For the first time this year the show will feature a new recording of the iconic song *Walking in the Air* in which the adult Aled Jones duets with his younger self, in a new arrangement by composer Howard Blake.

The new arrangement features on Aled's latest album *One Voice at Christmas*, which recently reached number one in the Classic FM charts, and will now also feature in *The Snowman* on stage.

Aled Jones said: "Walking in the Air caps off such a great year for me and I'm thrilled to give it a new lease of life. Who knows, maybe we'll get to the top of the Christmas chart again!"

Howard Blake said: "This is a unique theatrical event whereby through the wonders of technology one can hear Aled at the age of 12 singing with Aled as the tenor he is now. I am delighted that we can include it in the show."

Based on the book by Raymond Briggs and the film directed by Diane Jackson, the stage show has transported generations of children and their families into the wintry world of a boy and his magical snowman.

The Birmingham Rep production features music and lyrics by Howard Blake performed by a live orchestra,



The Snowman at Birmingham Rep is a traditional wintertime family treat

choreography by Robert North, direction by Bill Alexander, design by Ruari Murchison and lighting by Tim Mitchell.

The enchanting show tells the story of a young boy's adventures when his snowman comes miraculously to life on Christmas Eve. Featuring a daz-

zling array of colourful characters including dancing penguins, magical reindeer, a beautiful snow princess, her wicked beau Jack Frost and of course, Father Christmas himself.

The Snowman is a Christmas treat for all the family and a perfect introduction to theatre for the very young.



Fuller sound for Fall Girl

A SINGER-SONGWRITER has released her first self-produced album. Michelle Sciarrotta, who performs under the name Fall Girl, released debut album *Arcana* on digital platforms including iTunes, Spotify and Amazon this month.

She says the 11-track album, which was recorded, written and produced in her home studio, gave her a chance to experiment with different styles.

It acts as an expansion to her stripped back live sets, with songs she performs in front of audiences using just her voice and acoustic guitar fleshed out with keyboards, drums and more.

Michelle, originally from Coventry, said: "This has been the first major project I have put together on my own, which is something I have quite enjoyed. It is daunting, because there are times when you miss working with other people. But what you get is the clearest representation of the sound you want in your head, it is less of a committee thing."

Record

Michelle is a classically-trained musician who makes her living from performing, not only as Fall Girl but under her own name with a covers set, as well as working with other musicians including former Wolfsbane rocker Blaze Bayley.

A launch event for physical copies of *Arcana* was held at record shop Vinyl & Vintage, on Cleveland Street in Wolverhampton. Michelle will play her final show of the year as Fall Girl on December 27 at The Jam House in Birmingham. For more information on Fall Girl, visit www.facebook.com/fallgirlmusic or see fallgirl.net

Make arena dates with rock legends

CLASSIC rock fans can add major gigs in Birmingham to their 2017 diaries. School's Out rocker Alice Cooper will be at the Barclaycard Arena on November 14 with The Mission and The Tubes. Before that, his shock rock rivals Kiss, fronted by Gene Simmons, play the Barclaycard Arena on May 8.

Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow are at the NEC Genting Arena on June 28 and his former colleagues bring Deep Purple to the Barclaycard Arena on November 17. The Who perform Tommy and more at the Barclaycard Arena April 12 and Black Sabbath say farewell at the Genting Arena on February 2 and 4.

Osmonds join Brum festivities

JIMMY Osmond brings his brothers Merrill and Jay to Birmingham Town Hall on Friday in tribute to the late crooner Andy Williams, who launched The Osmonds with his Christmas Extravaganza TV shows.

The festive variety show will also feature Britain's Got Talent ventriloquist Steve Hewlett and singer Charlie Green.

Also on Friday night, singers Laura Tebbutt and Tim Howar join Capital Voices and London Concert Orchestra for White Christmas at the Symphony Hall. The same venue hosts Christmas By Candlelight with the Mozart Festival Orchestra on Christmas Eve afternoon.

Musical nostalgia with tribute bands

GET the festivities going with the sounds of three decades ago with tribute act Kick Up The 80s at Bilston's Robin 2 venue on Friday. Or join The Upbeat Beatles for a Christmas Eve tribute to the Fab Four at the Robin on Saturday.

Also coming up at the Mount Pleasant venue are Thin Lizzy tribute Limehouse Lizzy on Boxing Day night, ska legends Bad Manners on Tuesday and The Dirty DC tribute to Aussie rockers AC/DC on Wednesday.

Turn the clock back to Madchester in the 90s for a triple tribute featuring Definitely Maybe, Adored and Happy Mondays on Thursday (Dec 29).

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CHOICE



Shirley Bassey

David Walliams Celebrates Dame Shirley Bassey (BBC1, 9pm)

They say that parody is the highest form of flattery. If that's the case, Shirley Bassey should be thrilled to bits by the way in which David Walliams and Matt Lucas paid homage to her during their late-1990s show Rock Profiles – Lucas played the great Dame as a diva claiming to have had more hits than she actually has. Not that the girl from Tiger Bay is exactly short of career-defining songs, having performed three 007 title numbers as well as plenty of other show-stopping tunes (her rendition of Big Spender remains definitive, for instance). She turns 80 in January, and to celebrate that landmark, she shares the stage with Walliams, one of her biggest fans.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen. **11.30 Film:** A Christmas Carol. (2009) **1.00 BBC News.** Weather. **1.15 Winter:** Earth's Seasonal Secrets. **2.15 Film:** The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian. (2008) **4.30 Shrek the Halls.** (R) **4.50 Film:** Penguins of Madagascar. (2014) **6.15 BBC News.** **6.25 Regional Programme.** **6.30 Pointless Celebrities.** Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present a Christmas special of the general knowledge quiz, with Lesley Joseph, Duncan James, Faye Tozer, Bobby Davro and Joe Pasquale. **7.25 Michael McIntyre's Big Christmas Show.** Michael puts a festive spin on his weekend variety entertainment show, with live performances by Alfie Boe, Michael Ball, Catherine Tate and Harry Enfield. **8.25 EastEnders.** Phil is given some tough love by both Shirley and Denise, Linda receives devastating family news and Dot closes up for the final time. Donna is touched by a dinner invitation. **9.00 David Walliams Celebrates Dame Shirley Bassey.** The comedy actor hosts this special evening of entertainment in which the veteran singer performs some of her best-loved songs and looks back on her 60 years in showbusiness. **10.05 Peter Kay's Christmas Comedy Shuffle.** A festive collection of clips from the comedian's TV career, featuring highlights from Car Share and Phoenix Nights, as well as a seasonal singalong with Paul McCartney. **10.50 The Vicar of Dibley.** Alice suggests an unconventional nativity play starring herself and Hugo as Mary and Joseph, and adds an extra touch of authenticity by going into labour mid-performance. (R) **11.30 BBC News.** Weather. National Lottery Update. **11.45 Midnight Mass: from St Chad's Birmingham.** The Most Rev Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham, leads a Christmas Eve Midnight Mass broadcast live from St Chad's Cathedral. **1.00 Film:** Surviving Christmas. (2004) **2.25 Weather for the Week Ahead.** **2.30 BBC News.**

BBC2

6.15 Film: Mars Needs Moms. (2011) Animated sci-fi adventure, with the voice of Seth Robert Dusky. **7.40 The NFL Show.** (R) **8.10 Film:** Hans Christian Andersen. (1952) Musical, starring Danny Kaye. **10.00 Robot Wars.** (R) **11.00 Wallace & Gromit: A Close Shave.** (R) **11.00 Nigella's Christmas Kitchen.** (R) **12.00 The Cook Who Changed Our Lives.** (R) **1.00 Film:** Splash! (1984) Romantic fantasy comedy, with Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah. **2.45 Snow Chick: A Penguin's Tale.** (R) **3.45 Gorilla Family and Me.** (R) **4.45 Gorilla Family and Me.** (R) **4.45 Gorilla Family and Me.** (R) **5.45 Carols from King's.** **7.00 Dad's Army.** The platoon challenges a rival regiment to a gruelling duel, involving map-reading, initiative tests, river-crossing and field-fighting, to prove they are fitter and better trained than any other troop. Vintage comedy with the bumbling Home Guard of Walmington-on-Sea, starring Arthur Lowe, John Le Mesurier and Ian Lavender. (R) **8.00 Alan Bennett's Diaries.** A candid profile of the writer, following him in his home village in Yorkshire, to his community library in Primrose Hill and during a trip to New York. In a series of intimate encounters filmed over the period of a year, he reflects on his modest beginnings and his enduring gratitude to a Welfare State that paid for his education and looked after his parents in their old age. **9.00 Film: The Lady in the Van.** (2015) Premiere. The true story of writer Alan Bennett's friendship with an eccentric homeless woman, whom he befriended in the 1970s before allowing her to park her dilapidated Bedford van outside his Camden home, where she ended up staying for 15 years. Comedy-drama, starring Maggie Smith, Alex Jennings, Roger Allam and Jim Broadbent. **10.40 The National Lottery Live.** The all-important winning numbers are revealed. **10.50 Christmas TOTP2 Special.** Mark Radcliffe presents festive performances from the Top of the Pops archive, including classics by Slade, Wham!, Wizard, East 17, Mud, the Jackson 5 and Johnny Mathis. (R) **12.20 Film:** Viva Las Vegas. (1964) **1.40 Sign Zone:** Countryside. (R) **2.40 Holly City.** (R) **3.40 This Is BBC Two.** Preview of upcoming programmes.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.20 Dino Dan:** Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35 Dino Dan:** Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45 Super 4.** (R) **6.55 Signed Stories.** (R) **7.05 Sooty.** (R) **7.10 Oddbods.** (R) **7.15 Oddbods.** (R) **7.25 Nerds & Monsters.** (R) **7.40 Nerds & Monsters.** (R) **7.55 Horrid Henry.** (R) **8.10 Horrid Henry.** (R) **8.25 Weekend at Christmas.** **9.25 Thunderbirds Are Go.** **9.50 The Chase.** (R) **10.50 You've Been Framed!** With Bells On. (R) **11.20 Film:** Despicable Me. (2010) **1.20 ITV News:** Weather. **1.30 Film:** Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. (2001) Fantasy adventure, starring Daniel Radcliffe. **4.20 Film:** One Hundred and One Dalmatians. (1961) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Betty Lou Gerson. **6.00 Regional Programme.** Weather. **6.15 ITV News:** Weather. **6.30 Blankety Blank.** David Walliams presents a one-off special revival of the 1970s game show in which contestants and a panel of celebrities must identify the missing word in a phrase. **7.30 Coronation Street.** Aidan admits to Johnny he is in love with Maria while she heads to court, and Nick feels left out as Peter and Leanne reflect on old times. **8.00 Birds of a Feather.** Sharon, Tracey and Dorien head to Morocco to track down Travis when he goes missing while on his gap year. Comedy, starring Pauline Quirke, Linda Robson and Lesley Joseph. **9.00 Grantchester Christmas Special.** It's the week before Christmas, and Sidney and Georgie are drawn into a case with echoes of an unsolved murder from nine years previously when a bride-to-be reports the disappearance of her groom on their wedding day. Drama set in the 1950s, starring James Norton, Robson Green, Morven Christie and Ali Weaver. **10.30 Through the Keyhole.** Keith Lemon hosts a Christmas special of the game show, as celebrity panelists Shayne Ward, Kelly Brook and Johnny Vegas are asked to identify the homes of the rich and famous. **11.30 ITV News:** Weather. **11.45 Christmas Carols on ITV.** Aled Jones joins the congregation of St Chad's church in Rochdale. **12.40 All Star Mr & Mrs Christmas Special.** (R) **1.30 Film:** Carry On Loving. (1970) **3.05 ITV NightScreen.**

CHANNEL 4

6.15 Olive, the Other Reindeer. (R) **7.05 Film:** A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures. (2010) **8.40 Father Christmas.** (R) **9.10 Painting the Bear Hunt.** **9.15 Christmas Brunch.** **12.15 James's Ultimate Christmas.** (R) **1.15 The Simpsons.** (R) **1.45 The Simpsons.** (R) **2.15 The Simpsons.** (R) **2.45 Film:** Scrooged. (1988) Christmas comedy, starring Bill Murray. **4.40 Channel 4 News.** **4.45 The Snowman.** (R) **5.15 The Snowman and the Snowdog.** (R) **5.50 Film:** The Muppet Christmas Carol. (1992) Puppet comedy, starring Michael Caine. **7.30 We're Going on a Bear Hunt.** Animated adventure, based on Michael Rosen's popular children's story of the same name, featuring the voices of Olivia Colman, Pam Ferris and Mark Williams. **8.00 Gogglesparks Christmas Special.** Young TV viewers appraise the year's television programmes in this festive edition, from big news stories about the American Presidential election to TV's most popular hits, including Strictly Come Dancing, First Dates and Planet Earth II. **9.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown Christmas Special.** Jimmy Carr hosts a festive edition of the comedy panel show, with guests Kathy Burke and Russell Howard joining Sean Lock and Jon Richardson. With Joe Lycett and Joe Wilkinson. **10.00 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker 2016.** Alex Zane and his canine companion Bah Hum-Pug present some of the most popular seasonal internet videos, including a rocket-powered reindeer and a Christmas message from Björk. **11.00 Tricky Happy Christmas Special.** Dom Joly returns with a festive edition of the hidden-camera show, featuring new characters alongside the "big mobile man" who now has a smartphone with apps and video-calling. **11.30 The Inbetweeners.** The gang goes on the infamous sociology and geography field trip to Swanage, and Will takes a shine to new girl Lauren – but she is only interested in Simon. (R) **12.05 The Inbetweeners.** (R) **1.30 Friday Night Dinner.** (R) **2.25 The Last Leg Christmas Special.** (R) **3.20 Mr & Mrs Christmas Lights.** (R) **4.10 Location, Location, Location.** (R) **5.05 The Restoration Man.** (R) **5.55 Prep & Landing.** (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **8.30 SpongeBob SquarePants.** **9.05 Film:** Doctor Zhivago. (1965) **12.50 Film:** The Vikings. (1958) Historical adventure, starring Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis. **3.05 Film:** Jason and the Argonauts. (1963) Fantasy adventure, starring Todd Armstrong. **5.10 Film:** Scrooged – A Christmas Carol. (1951) Charles Dickens' fantasy, starring Alastair Sim. **6.55 Andre Rieu: Christmas in London.** A festive concert given by the Dutch violinist and the Johann Strauss Orchestra in 2015, featuring Christmas carols, popular classical pieces and songs including Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah and the Concerto de Aranjuez. **8.00 The Yorkshire Vet at Christmas.** The veterinary documentary series concludes with a festive trip to Skeldale. Elderly farmer Jean, one of the show's most colourful characters, makes a Christmas cake with ingredients that have been "maturing" for seven years, and vet Peter Wright fears the worst when he is called to tend to a cow that has collapsed. Back at the surgery, Julian Norton has to make a difficult decision regarding Barney, a spaniel with a huge, fast-growing tumour on his leg. The residents of Thirsk plan to mark James Herriot's centenary by inviting his successors to turn on the town's Christmas lights, but Julian and Peter face a more daunting challenge when they are asked to help find a donkey for the town square nativity scene. Last in the series. **9.00 Eamonn & Ruth: A Million Pound Christmas.** Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langford discover the most expensive ways in which people can enjoy the season of goodwill, beginning by sampling a £10,000 advent calendar. **10.00 Greatest Ever Christmas Movies.** Countdown of the best festive films, from It's a Wonderful Life to Bad Santa. Featuring contributions by Gremlins star Zach Galligan and Miracle on 34th Street's Mara Wilson. (R) **12.55 Film:** Scrooged – A Christmas Carol. (1951) **2.25 SuperCasino.** **4.00 The Trafford Centre:** Countdown to Christmas. (R) **4.50 House Doctor.** (R) **5.20 Angels of Jarm.** (R) **5.25 Roary the Racing Car.** (R) **5.35 Milkshake!** Bop Box. (R) **5.40 Peppa Pig.** (R) **5.45 Paw Patrol.**

DIGITAL

BBC Four **7.00 All Aboard!** The Sleigh Ride **9.00 Top of the Pops Christmas Hits** **10.30 Roy Orbison: One of the Lonely Ones** **11.30 Steptoe and Son** **12.15 Top of the Pops: 1982** **1.25 Shirley Bassey** at the BBC **2.25 Top of the Pops** **3.55 Close** **ITV2** **11.50 The Nation's Favourite Disney Song** **12.50 Film:** Santa Paws **2. The Santa Pups** (2012) **2.35 Film:** Mickey's Twice Upon a Christmas (2004) **4.00 The Smurfs:** A Christmas Carol **4.25 You've Been Framed!** at Christmas **5.25 Catchphrase Christmas Special** **6.30 You've Been Framed!** at Christmas **6.55 Film:** The Polar Express (2004) **9.00 Film:** Quantum of Solace (2008) **11.15 Family Guy** **12.15 American Dad!** **1.40 Celebrity Juice Christmas Special** **2.35 Film:** Deceased (2005) **4.20 Educating Jesse** **What Are You Sleighing?** **5.05 Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records** **5.30 Christmas Bonkers Guinness World Records** **5.55 ITV3 NightScreen** **ITV3** **11.45 Film:** Columbo: The Conspirators (1978) **1.50 Hans Christian Andersen: My Life as a Fairy Tale** **3.50 The Sound of Music Live!** **6.30 The Making of the Sound of Music Live** **7.00 Lewis** **9.00 I'll Be Alright on the Night** **10.00 Michael Flatley: A Night to Remember** **11.00 The Suspicions of Mr Whicher** **1.05 Inspector Morse** **3.00 Hans Christian Andersen: My Life as a Fairy Tale** **4.40 The Darling Buds of May** **5.35 ITV3 NightScreen** **ITV4** **12.10 Film:** The Searchers (1956) **1.20 FYI Daily** **1.25 Film:** The Searchers (1956) **2.30 Film:** The Horse Soldiers (1959) **9.00 Film:** Rio Bravo (1959) **7.50 Film:** Cannonball Run II (1984) **10.00 Film:** The Devil's Advocate (1997) **11.25 Film:** Road (2014) **3.00 Hell on Wheels** **3.45 ITV4 NightScreen** **3.50 Tommy Cooper** **4.15 The Professionals** **5.10 Minder** **E4** **11.55 Film:** Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules (2011) **2.00 Father Christmas** **2.35 Prep & Landing** **3.00 Prep & Landing:** Naughty v Nice **3.25 The Big Bang Theory** **9.00 Film:** The Inbetweeners Movie (2011) **11.05 Gogglebox** **1.10 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker 2014** **2.15 Rude Tube** **3.20 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker** **4.10 Made in Chelsea Christmas** **5.00 Melissa & Joey Film4** **11.00 Miracle on 34th Street** (1994) **1.15 Arthur Christmas** (2011) **3.15 Mr Popper's Penguins** (2011) **5.05 Thunderbirds** (2004) **6.50 Knight and Day** (2010) **9.00 Last Vegas** (2013) **11.10 The Transporter** (2002) **12.55 Rear Window** (1954) **3.15 Close**

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CHOICE



Peter Capaldi

Doctor Who

(BBC1, 5.45pm)

It's been a bleak year for Whovians. Instead of having a full series to enjoy, there's been nothing apart from spin-off series Class. It's been delightful, but it's just not the same as having some Tardis action to get your teeth into. But, as they say, absence makes the heart grow fonder, and as Steven Moffat (who bows out as the showrunner next year) has had an extra 12 months to work on this single episode, we're expecting big things. Not that the BBC is letting fans know too much about it – as with previous episodes, it's only giving away the barest essentials. So we'll see Peter Capaldi's Time Lord travel to New York, where he comes face to face with a mysterious superhero called The Ghost.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** CBeebies The Nutcracker. **9.45** Legend of the Boneknapper Dragon. (R) **10.00** Christmas Day Service – Live from Bristol Cathedral. **11.00** Songs of Praise: Christmas Big Sing. **11.40** BBC News. Weather. **11.50** Film: The Groods. (2013) **1.20** Shaun the Sheep: The Farmer's Llamas. (R) **1.50** Top of the Pops Christmas. **2.50** BBC News: Weather. **3.00** The Queen's Christmas Broadcast. **3.10** Film: Frozen. (2013) **4.45** The Great Christmas Bake Off. **5.45** Doctor Who. **6.45** **Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special.** Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman host the festive special, with previous contestants Denise Lewis, Frankie Bridge, Pamela Stephenson, Ainsley Harriott, Gethin Jones and Melvin Odoom. **8.00** **Call the Midwife.** Christmas special, in which the nurses of Nonnatus House travel to South Africa to help the struggling staff of a mission clinic faced with closure. Sinead Cusack guest stars. **9.30** **EastEnders.** Any hopes of a merry Christmas seem slim with Phil's health deteriorating rapidly. Lee struggling with the burden of his secrets and the return of none other than Max Branning. **10.30** **Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special.** Grandad's health causes concern, Mrs Brown steps in when a fire at the salon leaves Rory and Dino with nowhere to work, while Dermot faces stiff competition to win a contract. **11.00** **The Best of Tracey Ullman's Show.** Highlights from the comedy sketch show, as well as some brand new material, including a look at what would happen if Clare Balding was left in charge of BBC's Christmas schedules. **11.30** BBC News: Weather. **11.45** **On Christmas Night.** Don Warrington reads the bible story of the shepherds' visit to the Christ Child. **11.50** **Would I Lie to You? At Christmas.** With Richard Osman, Tom Courtenay, Sara Pascoe and Chris Kamara. (R) **12.20** **Have I Got a Bit More** 2016 News for You. **1.05** Citizen Khan. (R) **1.35** Film: While You Were Sleeping. (1995) **3.10** Weather for the Week Ahead. **3.15** BBC News.

BBC2

6.40 Countryfile. (R) **7.35** Film: The Cat in the Hat. (2003) **8.50** Film: Tom Thumb. (1958) **10.20** Film: Bee Movie. (2007) **11.40** Carols from King's. (R) **12.55** Wild Tales from the Village. (R) **1.55** The Good Life. (R) **2.25** Film: The Artist. (2011) Oscar-winning silent drama, starring Jean Dujardin. **4.00** Dancing the Nutcracker – Inside the Royal Ballet. **5.30** Sign Zone: The Queen's Christmas Broadcast. (R) **5.40** The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show – 1976. (R) **6.45** **Christmas University Challenge.** Alumni of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and St Hilda's, Oxford compete in the penultimate first-round match of the special run of Christmas episodes. Jeremy Paxman hosts. **7.15** **Blackadder's Christmas Carol.** Kindly Victorian pushover Ebenezer Blackadder is visited by the Spirit of Christmas and gains an insight into the dastardly deeds of his ancestors. Starring Rowan Atkinson. (R) **8.00** **Dad's Army.** Pompous Captain Mainwaring proves he is a softie at heart by organising a Christmas treat for the struggling senior citizens of Walmington-on-Sea. (R) **8.30** **Gospel Christmas.** Gregory Porter and Beverley Knight host a concert from St John at Hackney, London, featuring the London Community Gospel Choir, the House Gospel Choir performing in front of a live audience, with guest vocalists including Katy B, Shaun Escoffery and vocal quintet Vadé. **9.30** **Victorian Bakers at Christmas.** The bakers prepare Victorian Christmas recipes, including twelfth cakes, bread-based punch, roasts to feed entire communities, and mince pies made with either beef or tripe. **10.30** **QI XL.** Sandi Toksvig and Alan Davies are joined by Josh Widdicombe, Susan Calman and Matt Lucas for an extended festive special, with a series of tough questions on the subject of Noel. **11.15** Film: **Great Expectations.** (2012) An orphan is given the chance to rise through high society with the assistance of a mysterious benefactor. Period drama, with Jeremy Irvine and Helena Bonham Carter. **1.15** Film: A Hard Day's Night. (1964) **2.40** This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **6.55** Sooty. (R) **7.10** Oddbods. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.20** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.30** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.45** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.00** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.25** Weekend at Christmas. **9.25** Countrywise: Guide to Britain. (R) **9.55** Film: Despicable Me 2. (2013) **11.55** Film: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. (2002) **3.00** The Queen. **3.10** Film: The Lion King. (1994) Disney animated musical, with the voice of Matthew Broderick. **4.55** ITV News: Weather. **5.15** You've Been Framed! Harry's Naughty List. **5.45** Emmerdale. **6.45** **Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas.** The comedian visits Battersea Dogs & Cats Home at Christmas, and tries to get a shaggle-toothed shih tzu the royal seal of approval when the Duchess of Cornwall drops by to open a new building. Paul also arranges an ultrasound for a heavily pregnant pug cross and nurses a dog with painfully bowed legs. **7.45** ITV News: Weather. **8.00** **Coronation Street.** Leanne is thrilled when Toyah returns to the cobbles, while Peter and Nick wind up bawling in the street, and Bethany collapses in the ginnet from an overdose. **9.00** **Maigret's Dead Man.** Rowan Atkinson stars as the Parisian detective in the second in a run of adaptations of Georges Simenon's books. Maigret is distracted from a string of attacks on three wealthy farms by a series of anonymous phone calls from a man who claims a gang is trying to kill him. He and his trusty associates LaPointe and Janvier go in search of the caller, which leads them to the discovery of a body that has been dumped out of a car. Maigret is convinced the corpse is the man who phoned him – but his face has been mutilated, making it impossible to confirm his identity. **11.00** Film: **Love Actually.** (2003) Interlinked tales of several people in search of love. Richard Curtis's romantic comedy, with Hugh Grant, Martine McCutcheon, Emma Thompson and Colin Firth. **1.30** Film: King Kong. (2005) **4.25** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.20 Prep & Landing: Naughty v Nice. (R) **6.40** The Bear. (R) **7.10** Painting the Bear Hunt. **7.15** Film: Animals United. (2010) **8.55** The Simpsons. (R) **9.20** The Simpsons. (R) **9.50** The Simpsons. (R) **10.20** The Simpsons. (R) **10.50** Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas. (R) **11.15** Painting the Bear Hunt. **11.20** Father Christmas. (R) **11.50** The Snowman. (R) **12.20** Film: The Wizard of Oz. (1939) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Rickie Sorenson. **2.05** The Alternative Christmas Message. **2.15** Channel 4 News. **2.20** Film: It's a Wonderful Life. (1946) Fantasy drama, starring James Stewart. **4.55** The Snowman and the Snowdog. (R) **5.25** We're Going on a Bear Hunt. (R) **6.00** Film: **Home Alone.** (1990) A boy has to fend for himself when he is accidentally left behind after his family jets off to Paris for Christmas. The youngster initially enjoys his freedom, but is soon forced to resort to ingenious booby traps to defend the family home from two dim-witted burglars. Comedy, starring Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, John Heard, Catherine O'Hara and John Candy. **8.00** **Travel Man: 48 Hours in Florence.** Rebel Wilson joins Richard Ayoade on a rapid-fire tour of the Italian city, taking in as much as they can in just two days. They race past iconic works of art including Botticelli's Venus and Michelangelo's David, take in some street art, go on a rafting trip down the River Arno, climb to the top of the city's cathedral and dine on a traditional tripe sandwich. **9.00** **Gogglebox 2016.** A look back at some of the highlights of this year's series, featuring regular armchair presenters Leon and June, Christopher and Stephen, and the Michaels family offering their thoughts on popular and topical TV shows. **10.30** **Alan Carr's Christmas Chat.** The host is joined for this Christmas special by guests including Tom Daley, Gary Barlow, Danni Minogue and Martin Kemp, with music from Emeli Sandé and Robbie Williams. **12.35** Film: Four Christmases. (2008) **2.05** Rude Tube Christmas. (2016) **3.05** Very British Problems at Christmas. (R) **4.00** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.00** Supershoppers. (R) **5.25** The Restoration Man. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.10 Milkshake!: Milkshake! Festive Fun. **6.15** Shimmer and Shine. **6.40** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.00** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **7.20** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **7.35** Film: An American in Paris. (1951) Romantic musical, starring Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron. **9.50** Film: On the Town. (1949) Musical, starring Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin. **11.50** Film: Scrooge. (1970) Musical fantasy, starring Albert Finney. **2.10** Film: The Wizard of Oz. (1939) Musical fantasy, starring Judy Garland. **4.10** Film: Singin' in the Rain. (1952) Musical comedy, starring Gene Kelly. **6.15** **Britain's Favourite Xmas Songs.** A countdown of popular songs that are guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing. Highlights include the Jackson 5's Santa Claus Is Coming to Town, Greg Lake's I Believe in Father Christmas, the Waitresses Christmas Wrapping and the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl's Fairytale of New York. Is Mud's Lonely This Christmas past its sell-by date? Will Jona Lewie ever Stop the Cavalry? And where would any Christmas party be without Slade and their classic anthem Merry Xmas Everybody? But which one will top the nation's festive chart? Featuring contributions by artists, producers, video directors, composers and journalists, who shed light on the creation of the songs and their accompanying videos. (R) **8.30** **When Celebrities Go Pop.** A countdown of the 40 most memorable musical efforts by celebrities who have decided to diversify into music. The programme features performances by Mr T, Katie Price, Vinnie Jones, Sam Fox, Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards, David Hasselhoff, an assortment of soap stars and Christopher Lee, who embarked on a second career as a heavy-metal singer in his 80s. **10.30** Film: **Dallas Buyers Club.** (2013) Premiere. A man diagnosed with HIV sets up an organisation to smuggle drugs for treating the condition into the US. Fact-based drama, starring Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto. **12.45** **Greatest Ever Christmas Songs.** (R) **1.10** SuperCasino. Live interactive gaming. **3.10** Chris Tarrant: On the Xmas Express. (R) **4.00** Now That's Funny! (R) **4.50** House Doctor. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 King Lear. **10.10** The Good Old Days: Christmas 1976. **11.00** Top of the Pops Christmas Hits. **12.00** Old Grey Whistle Test: 70's Gold. **1.30** All Aboard! The Sleigh Ride. **3.30** Close
ITV2
11.00 You've Been Framed! With Bells On. **11.35** Emmerdale. **12.00** Coronation Street. **1.05** Film: The Polar Express. (2004) **3.10** You've Been Framed! **4.15** Catchphrase Christmas Special. **5.15** Minion Madness. **5.30** Film: One Hundred and One Dalmatians (1961) **7.15** Film: Mr Bean's Holiday. (2007) **9.00** Film: Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason. (2004) **11.15** Family Guy. **1.10** American Dad! **2.05** The Cleveland Show. **2.30** Film: Not Another Teen Movie. (2001) **4.10** The Almost Impossible Gameshow. **5.00** Planet's Funniest Animals. **5.45** ITV2 Nightscreen
ITV3
11.30 Film: Carry On Cleo. (1964) **1.25** Film: Carry On Girls. (1973) **3.15** Film: Carry On Camping. (1969) **5.05** Film: Carry On Up the Jungle. (1970) **7.00** Film: Carry On Cowboy. (1966) **9.00** Film: Stepfoe and Son Ride Again. (1973) **11.00** Film: The Sting. (1973) **1.10** Film: The Four Musketeers. (1974) **3.35** Wycliffe. **5.00** Doctor at Large. **5.25** Movies Now. **5.35** ITV3 Nightscreen
ITV4
11.30 Film: The Green Berets. (1968) **2.20** Film: Dunkirk. (1958) **5.05** Film: Where Eagles Dare. (1968) **9.10** Film: Jaws: The Revenge. (1987) **10.00** Film: Body of Lies. (2008) **12.35** Film: The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo. (2011) **3.30** Hell on Wheels. **4.15** The Wine Show. **5.10** Goodwood Classic Cars
E4
11.25 Rude (ish) Tube Shorts. **11.30** Baby Daddy. **12.30** How I Met Your Mother. **2.30** The Goldbergs. **3.00** The Big Bang Theory: Festive Guests. **6.00** Frozen at Christmas. **7.00** The Snowman. **7.35** The Snowman and the Snowdog. **8.00** The Big Bang Theory. **9.00** Film: The Inbetweeners. **2.30** The Inbetweeners. **1.20** Tattoo Fixers at Christmas. **2.25** Virtually Famous Christmas Special. **3.10** The Inbetweeners. **3.35** Hollyoaks
Film4
11.00 Rio. (2011) **12.50** Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs. (2009) **2.35** Cheaper By the Dozen. (2003) **4.25** The Princess Diaries. (2001) **6.35** The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. (2011) **9.00** Thor. (2011) **11.15** Your Highness. (2011) **1.20** Vertigo. (1958) **4.00** Close

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FILM CHOICES

BOXING DAY

Captain Phillips, ITV, 9pm

An American cargo ship sets a dangerous course around the coast of Somalia, while inland, four men are pressed into service as pirates by the local warlords. The captain is taken hostage when the raiding party hijacks the vessel, resulting in a tense five-day crisis. Fact-based thriller, starring Tom Hanks and Barkhad Abdi. (2013)

TUESDAY

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, ITV, 7.30pm

The teenage wizard is chosen to represent Hogwarts School in a dangerous magical tournament. Fourth instalment of the fantasy saga, starring Daniel Radcliffe and Robert Pattinson. (2005)



Captain Phillips, Boxing Day, ITV, 9pm

WEDNESDAY

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, ITV, 7.30pm

The young wizard struggles to convince his fellow sorcerers that the evil Lord Voldemort has returned to life. When Hogwarts headmaster Dumbledore is ousted in favour of a sadistic replacement, Harry realises he must take matters into his own hands, uniting his fellow pupils to form a secret army and training them for the inevitable confrontation to come. Adventure sequel, starring Daniel Radcliffe. (2007)

THURSDAY

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull, BBC1, 11.20pm

The globe-trotting archaeologist races against Soviet agents to find a mysterious artefact of untold power. Action adventure sequel, starring Harrison Ford and Cate Blanchett. (2008)

FRIDAY

Captain America: The Winter Soldier, BBC1, 8.30pm

The superhuman soldier becomes an operative for secret intelligence agency SHIELD, but grows suspicious of their motives. Following a battle with a mysterious cyborg assassin, he and fellow Avenger Black Widow become fugitives, and try to bring down a sinister conspiracy. Comic-book thriller sequel, starring Chris Evans. (2014)

Money matters in this mystery tale of murder

TV may have brought us the definitive version of Hercule Poirot, but the BBC feels like the small screen home of Agatha Christie.

It has adapted the Miss Marple cases, and broadcast adventures based on the Tommy and Tuppence characters last year, as well as a blockbusting version of And Then There Were None.

The latter was shown during the festive season, and this year, there's another all-star Christie feast for fans – this take of her classic short story, The Witness for the Prosecution.

"And Then There Were None made a huge impact last year, garnering great reviews and audiences of over eight million," remarks executive producer Karen Thrusell. "We're thrilled to be reunited with Sarah Phelps as she takes on another iconic title, an incendiary courtroom drama that will keep you guessing right to the very end. The source material is so strong, and we hope the end result will be every bit as striking as And Then There Were None."

The Witness for the Prosecution is

no stranger to screen treatment, of course. The BBC made the first version way back in 1949; a US version made it to TV in 1953, the same year it was first produced as a stage play.

Perhaps the most famous adaptation came in 1957 when it was turned into a movie by none other than the legendary Billy Wilder, who cast Charles Laughton, Marlene Dietrich and Tyrone Power (in his final completed part) in the lead roles.

Then, in 1982, another TV drama followed, this time featuring an all-star cast that included Ralph Richardson, Deborah Kerr, Donald Pleasence and Wendy Hiller. It was recently announced that Ben Affleck will direct and star in a future take on the tale.

Filming for the latest production based on the story took place in Liverpool this summer and sees Toby Jones, Andrea Riseborough, Kim Cattrall and David Haig taking lead roles.

"With the long terrible shadow of the Great War falling across the rackety, feral 1920s, The Witness For The Prosecution is a compelling story of

deceit, desire, murder, money and morality, innocence and guilt, heartbreak and – most painful and dangerous of all – love," says Phelps. "At the centre of this dark and tangled net is the astonishing character of Romaine, a noir heroine for all our times."

Romaine is an enigmatic chorus girl and the partner of Leonard Vole, a young chancer who has been accused of the brutal murder of the enormously wealthy Emily French. She's been found in her handsome 1920s London residence and, having left her fortune to Vole, he certainly had a motive to kill her.

Vole is convinced that Romaine can prove his innocence, but he is in for a terrible surprise...

"Combining Sarah's brilliance with the excellent and skilful eye of our director, Julian Jarrold, we expect to deliver a show that will thrill both audiences who have enjoyed Christie's work before and those who are coming to it for the first time," claims Hilary Strong, CEO of Agatha Christie Ltd.

Let's hope her verdict is the right one!



The Witness for the Prosecution, Boxing Day, BBC1, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

BOXING DAY

Still Open All Hours

BBC1, 8.30pm

Granville and Gastric find themselves playing marriage counsellors, while Leroy adopts a festive disguise to avoid relationship trouble of a different kind. Meanwhile, Mrs Featherstone struggles to get into the Christmas spirit and Kath attempts to bring the street together as one harmonious choir of carollers to beat Finkle Street once and for all - but does Granville have a trick up his sleeve to help them out? David Jason, Tim Healy, James Baxter and Stephanie Cole star.

TUESDAY

There's a Croc in My Kitchen

Channel 5, 8pm

Documentary following people around Britain who keep predatory wild animals as unusual pets. Chris Weller from Kent owns a crocodile, and spent £20,000 converting his house to accommodate the dangerous reptile, while in Gloucester, Patricia and her sons live with a serval, a big cat that is one of Africa's deadliest hunters. Jim and Chris own a 20-stone Komodo dragon, while Terry fears his pet lynx Pudding may have been poisoned. Devon resident Andre owns a wolf hybrid that shares her bed – but fears he may be on his last legs.

WEDNESDAY

Jonathan Creek

BBC1, 9pm

It's not quite a Christmas ghost story, but there's definitely a spooky element to Jonathan's latest case, which centers on Daemons' Roost, the home of a 19th-century sorcerer who claimed to be able to summon the powers of Hell. The property now belongs to horror film director Nathan Clore (played by Ken Bones, which is arguably an even better name for a gore maestro) who summons his stepdaughter Alison (Georgie Lord) home so he can explain exactly what happened to her family there when she was a child. Unfortunately, Clore suffers a debilitating stroke before he can come clean, leaving Alison to try to piece together the mystery together herself. Jonathan may be just the man to help her, but his wife Polly (Sarah Alexander) believes he's already got enough on his plate. Meanwhile, the Reverend Wendell Wilkie (Warwick Davis) also finds himself drawn into the mystery.

THURSDAY

Life in the Snow

BBC1, 8pm

Gordon Buchanan goes in search of



Jonathan Creek, Wednesday, BBC1, 9pm

animals that live in snowy conditions and have adapted to survive in cold weather. The programme features polar bears raising their cubs, owls keeping their supplies of food hidden under a layer of snow, penguins that huddle together for warmth, and wolverines and ravens working alongside each other to find food. He also takes a look at the lives of animals associated with Christmas, including robins and reindeer, revealing the truth behind the story of Rudolph's red nose.

FRIDAY

Noel's Sell or Swap Live

Channel 4, 7pm

Children of the 1970s and 1980s might remember Noel Edmonds' Saturday morning TV show Multi Coloured Swap Shop which, in the days before the internet, gave kids a

chance to offload their junk by exchanging it for someone else's. So, prepare to feel nostalgic as Noel hosts this familiar-sounding programme, in which guests get a chance to bid on an eclectic mix of items. The owners will also be there to explain why they are getting rid of their stuff – it might be an unwanted present, something bought in haste, or the cause of a series of family rows. Or perhaps they just thought it would be more fun to be on the TV then to sell it online. Either way, Noel and his SoS team are here to help.

Judi Dench: All the World's Her Stage

BBC2, 8pm

She's one of Britain's greatest actors and has also been dubbed 'the second most popular woman in Britain' (presumably the Queen pipped her to the top spot). Now this documentary, narrated by Colin Salmon, looks back over her remarkable 60-year career, and finds out just why she has become such an institution. The actors sharing their memories of working with her include Daniel Craig, Sir Ian McKellen and Billy Connolly, who reminisces about the time he thought Judi was falling for him on the set of Mrs Brown. Former Miss Money Penny Samantha Bond reveals that she had to calm Pierce Brosnan's nerves before his first scene with the legendary actress.



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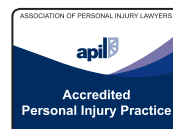


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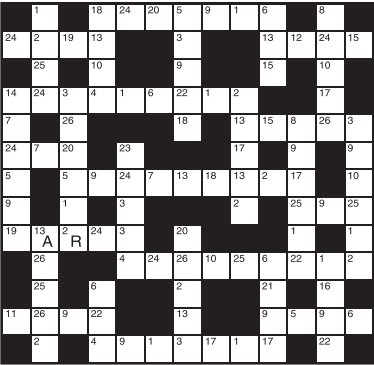
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BRAIN GYM No.409

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

D	H	G	B	Q	K	P	N	L	Y	Z	A	W
J	S	O	E	I	V	U	F	C	X	T	M	R

1	14
2	R
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	A
14	26

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

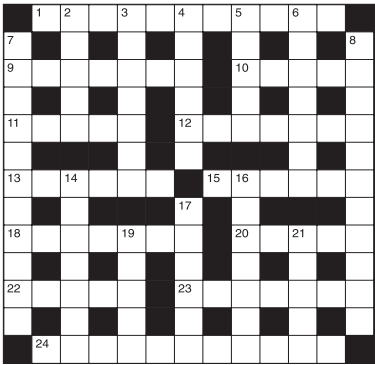
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- 1. Service chiefs? (4,7)
- 9. They may be black or white pelts (7)
- 10. Get to a stretch of the river (5)
- 11. The car that creates records (5)
- 12. His choice will get cross (7)
- 13. Father's attempt to be a kind of cook (6)
- 15. Scarcity of thread, perhaps (6)
- 18. Train that is brought to absolute rest (7)
- 20. Excel in striking a note (5)
- 22. It comes back to beat a giant (5)
- 23. At least a soldier will be (7)
- 24. A case of mixed dates (11)

Down

- 2. Turn out a bad scholar? (5)
- 3. She puts on other people's clothes (7)
- 4. Result of a questionable action? (6)
- 5. All-male crew of a novel boat (5)
- 6. Person goes round a nuclear establishment (7)
- 7. Fit to take possession (11)
- 8. Time may be on its side (6,5)
- 14. Don't allow bitterness to remain (7)
- 16. Perhaps ore is turned up on wearing away of the soil (7)
- 17. Soldier with papers in order (6)
- 19. The keynote of medicine (5)
- 21. Is in too much hurry to use the letter-opener? (5)



Quick Clues:

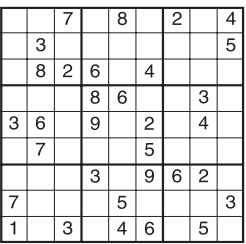
Across

- 1. Being tested (2,9)
- 9. Stupid (7)
- 10. Engine (5)
- 11. Bit (5)
- 12. Feeling (7)
- 13. Spent (6)
- 15. Mourn (6)
- 18. Harbour (7)
- 20. Unsullied (5)
- 22. Proportion (5)
- 23. Ingenuous (7)
- 24. Disbelief (11)

Down

- 2. Sound (5)
- 3. Withdraw (7)
- 4. Squabble (6)
- 5. Time (5)
- 6. Exterior (7)
- 7. Indignation (11)
- 8. Insobriety (11)
- 14. Raze (7)
- 16. Narration (7)
- 17. Filament (6)
- 19. Small (5)
- 21. Upright (5)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	9	5	6	1	7	4	8	3
8	4	3	2	5	9	6	1	7
1	7	6	3	4	8	2	9	5
6	8	4	1	9	5	3	7	2
5	2	1	4	7	3	9	6	8
7	3	9	8	6	2	1	5	4
4	5	7	9	3	1	8	2	6
3	1	8	5	2	6	7	4	9
9	6	2	7	8	4	5	3	1

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Crossbar; 5 Spot; 9 Anti; 10 Overcome; 11 Downy; 12 Raiders; 13 Grappling iron; 18 Narrates; 19 Fit; 20 Realize; 21 Sarah; 22 Last; 23 Slipends. Down: 2 Rancour; 3 Stirrup; 4 Advertisement; 6 Pioneer; 7 Treason; 8 Trying; 13 General; 14 Airways; 15 Placid; 16 Inflate; 17 Off-hand. QUICK - Across: 1 Communal; 5 Wash; 9 Keen; 10 Relevant; 11 Calms; 12 Edifice; 13 Glamorousness; 18 Vertical; 19 Mine; 20 Revenue; 21 Anger; 22 Silt; 23 Recalled. Down: 2 Overall; 3 Minimum; 4 An eye for an eye; 6 Avarice; 7 Hotness; 8 Remiss; 13 Govers; 14 Arrival; 15 Orient; 16 Nominal; 17 Sincere.

Thinking space



Quiz

- 1. Which religion's holy book is the Guru Granth Sahib?
- 2. Which sporting entertainers were founded in 1927 by Abraham Saperstein?
- 3. What, in the SI system, replaced the erg?
- 4. Which singer's autobiography is called Take Me Home?
- 5. What was Queen Victoria's residence on the Isle of Wight?
- 6. Which king of England was James VII of Scotland?
- 7. Who provides the voice for wicked Uncle Scar in The Lion King?
- 8. Whose band were the Crickets?
- 9. Which US state is nicknamed the Garden State?
- 10. Who originally conducted the Three Tenors?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Eight; 2 Elgar; 3 Jack Straw; 4 St. Bernadette; 5 A monkey; 6 Guy Gibson; 7 Anna Pasternak; 8 Carpathians; 9 Barbarossa; 10 Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Niner: GERANIUMS

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

9628745 gives a hard rock,
13784 gives a hard stone,
9674 gives small stones.



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Hot dog with a difference – Mac and Cheese Dog



Burger Priest in busy spot in Wolverhampton city centre



Are you sitting comfortably – variety of seating choices



High Priest Burger – one of the many choices

Praise be! It's a Priestly burger

IN the beginning, there was the burger, and the burger was... well, not very good.

It's fair to say that it has taken the UK some time to master the hamburger. Once the only options you were McDonalds, Wimpy, and the kind of hot food vans you get at Wolves matches.

Not exactly an embarrassment of riches. Eventually Burger King came along and upped the burger game somewhat.

Then The Gourmet Burger Kitchen arrived and changed all that, reasoning that if you were going to be a burger chain, then people might be willing to pay a bit more money and come back for more if the burgers were, you know, actually half-decent.

And so burgers got posh. Rather than the embarrassingly perfunctory slabs of meat and processed cheese on offer at high street fast food establishments, you now get things like dry-aged steak, smoked Applewood cheese, onion jam, truffle mayonnaise and avocado.

The success of Gourmet Burger Kitchen proved that there was a market for Fancy

Pete Cashmore tucks in

Dan poshbunners, and indeed the subsequent rise of Five Guys, of which there are two in Birmingham, proved that you could apply the posh burger ethos to a fast food environment and make it work.

Any city worth its salt has at least one posh burger joint in its midst, and it was with this in mind that, a few months back, Wolverhampton welcomed Burger Priest. How could it possibly fail? It's in a prime location opposite House Of Fraser, with a whole load of footfall due to the fact that the Man On The Oss is around the corner.

Which is why it's puzzling that when myself and my dinner date arrived at 8pm on a Saturday, the place was all but deserted, with more serving staff than customers.

It may well be that we were in some kind of post-dinner, pre-chucking out time lull, or that word of mouth hasn't started working for Burger Priest yet. What this at least meant was that we got to take up one of the sofas in the funky interior – there are sofas, regular tables and high-stool diner-style

counters to choose from. As we entered, Rosanna by Toto was playing on the music system which I took as a good sign. Largely, I was proved correct.

It's a fascinating proposition, is Burger Priest, with a menu full of the weird and the eccentric and the occasionally downright loopy. If you wanted, for example, you could feast on something called the Surf'n'Turf Burger, six ounces of meat patties on a bun, with lobster tail meat and seafood sauce.

Trimmings

Another option might be the Mac and Cheese Dog, which as the name suggests is a Frankfurter sausage on a bun, topped with crispy bacon and macaroni and cheese. I think it's fair to say that one has enough stodge for anyone.

My comrade and I decided to play it safe and go for the Altar Burger, one each, which is simply a double-patty burger with bacon, smoked Applewood cheese and all the salad trimmings. You have the option of piling on some extras at no extra cost if you feel the need, which I obviously did, and

so I decided to throw in a layer of sautéed mushrooms too – sautéed onions, bell peppers and beef tomato are among some of the other choices.

Now, initially I had intended to just get a burger and fries, but at the last minute I had a rush of blood to the head and decided that my side should be salted beef poutine, consisting of French fries in meat gravy with cheese curd.

Well it seems like Burger Priest subscribe to the American model of meat patty – basically, shape a big lump of beef until it is roughly round and then slap it on the grill with the minimum of frills and let it go. The smoked cheese is, I would argue, the perfect cheese to accompany a burger, and the bacon was thick and rustic.

Burger Priest definitely isn't for everyone – it's loud, it's funky, it's a bit brash and you have to be prepared to literally get your hands dirty. My suggestion to them would be to provide their customers with multiple wet wipes and then they'd be nudging true greatness. Even so, they claim to treat their meaty products with a touch of the divine, and in me, they have a new convert.

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Tips to help keep festive pot plants at their best

Hannah Stephenson offers tips on how to keep a festive favourite looking its best

POINSETTIAS are the symbol of Christmas, their traditional red bracts bringing festive cheer to the home – and now Poinsettias come in a range of colours, including light pinks and creams, which would complement more subtle decor.

Six million plants are sold in the UK in just three weeks in the run-up to Christmas Day, with 80 per cent snapped up in the final shopping weekend, according to grower group the British Protected Ornamentals Association. Caroline Marshall-Foster, editor of The Florist magazine, suggests an alternative way of decorating with poinsettia is to arrange a row of them in simple copper-coloured pots along the mantelpiece or the windowsill, or to dot a few potted poinsettias among lush green garlands of pine and spruce.

Celebrity florist Larry Walsh says that using metallic-coloured containers can instantly add a hint of Christmas luxury to your poinsettia.

“A bit of sparkle makes Christmas. Accessorise your arrangement with gold-leafed candles and glassware and you have the perfect festive table decoration.” Yet so often poinsettias wilt before the Christmas guests start arriving. So, how do you keep them going?

1. Make sure you buy a healthy plant whose roots are not spilling out through the base of the pot. Check where it is located when you buy it because plants that have been stood outdoors a long time may fail. Unwrap them as soon as you get them home.



2. Place them in a light spot, but not in direct sunlight. If direct sunlight hits the plant, reposition it. Poinsettias should be kept warm, ideally between 13-22C. Don't place them in draughts and avoid cool rooms.

3. The most common cause of failure is over-watering. Let the upper half of the compost become dry before watering thoroughly. This may mean letting the water drain away and then watering it again. Don't let them stand in water.

4. Mist the leaves frequently as poinsettias (Euphorbia pulcherrima), which are native to Mexico and Central America, need moist air.

5. If your poinsettia starts to wilt and is as dry as a bone, soak the rootball in warm water, which may revive it.

As well as the traditional red varieties, you can also buy poinsettias in pink and white or with lighter green leaves. Try the stunning white Princettia 'Pure White', a new addition to the Thomson & Morgan range (£14.99, www.thompson-morgan.com) or the popular cream type 'Regina'.



Euonymus will grow in all sorts of soils in both sun and partial shade

All-year shrub will bring colour to winter gardens

BEST OF THE BUNCH – Euonymus

WHILE the deciduous varieties of euonymus, such as E. alatus, grown for its red autumn foliage, evergreen varieties of this shrub are invaluable, both to add all-year interest in the border and as a great contrasting feature in winter pots, alongside winter heathers, pansies and dwarf conifers.

Euonymus will grow in all sorts of soils in both sun and partial shade. Variegated types are the most noticeable, including E. japonicus 'Aureopictus', which has yellow leaves with a green rim and 'Ovatus Aureus', which has a yellow rim. As well as making great ground cover plants, some types can be used as climbers, clinging like ivy, such as the silver-edged variety E. fortunei 'Silver Queen', which reaches up to 3m (10ft) against a wall, while other tall-growing specimens can be used for hedging. Variegated types prefer full sun and little or no pruning is required.

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT – Windowsill herbs

YOUR herb garden may be looking a bit sorry for itself at this time of year, but you can still

have the fresh taste of herbs by growing some on your windowsill indoors.

If you have mint or chives in the garden, dig up some roots to force on a warm windowsill. Soon enough, they will start growing again. For a really easy life, buy pots of fresh herbs from the supermarket and they should keep growing if you water them and keep cutting them little and often. It's also easy to grow herbs indoors from seed, including annuals such as chervil, coriander, basil and parsley. Just sow them thinly in pots and let them grow.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

:: Plant bare-root and container grown roses and transplant any established roses you want to resite.

:: Create an inexpensive hedge by taking hardwood cuttings and inserting them directly into the growing site.

:: Prune autumn-flowering shrubs over three years old as they finish flowering.

:: Drain surface pumps in the pond and have them serviced if necessary. Or else clean, dry and grease before storing.

Planning ahead is sure to bring rich rewards

By Hannah Stephenson

CREATING a vegetable patch, whether on a large piece of ground or within a smaller raised bed, can bring rich rewards if you plan carefully.

Growing compatible crops together is likely to reap richer harvests, while not treading soil from one bed to another and keeping your tools clean between use will help keep soil healthy and reduce the likelihood of the spread of pests and diseases.

The idea behind crop rotation is that you avoid planting the same crop in the same bit of ground more than one year in four to stop root diseases building up and to make the most of resources such as manure, which is only needed for certain crops but not for others (like root crops).

Regular

Crops which can be grown together include legumes (peas and beans), comprising peas and broad, French and runner beans; the onion family, including garlic, leeks, onions, shallots and spring onions; roots and tubers, including carrots, parsnips, beetroot, potatoes and tomatoes; and brassicas (cabbage family), featuring Brussels sprouts, cabbages, Chinese greens, pak choi, radish, cauliflowers, swedes and turnips.

Green veg which require regular watering can be separated from less thirsty root crops, lettuces are often grown with cabbage family crops as they need organic



If you have an existing vegetable plot, dig it over each winter

matter, nitrogen fertiliser and regular watering.

Perennial veg like rhubarb and asparagus are best kept out of crop rotation beds.

Squeeze quick-growing crops of lettuce and other salad leaves wherever they will fit, using them as a catch crop between slower-growing types such as winter brassicas.

By swapping the main groups of vegetables around in a regular order, you can

make best use of the nutrients in the soil because different crops need different amounts of nutrients.

If you're starting a new plot or creating raised vegetable beds, prepare the ground thoroughly, digging to break up compacted soil and weeding thoroughly.

Then add bulky organic matter before planting season starts.

It may be better to do this in spring, using compost as a surface mulch. If you have an



Keeping tools clean will help keep soil healthy

existing vegetable plot, dig it over each winter, inverting lumps of soil to bury annual weeds, but leave the clods intact.

Frost and rain will break them down and leave a crumbly soil by spring.

On light, sandy soils, wait until spring before digging.

Sandy soils may also need liming regularly to give them a neutral pH.

If in doubt, buy a soil tester to test the pH of your soil.



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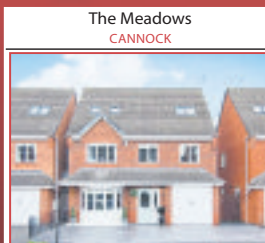
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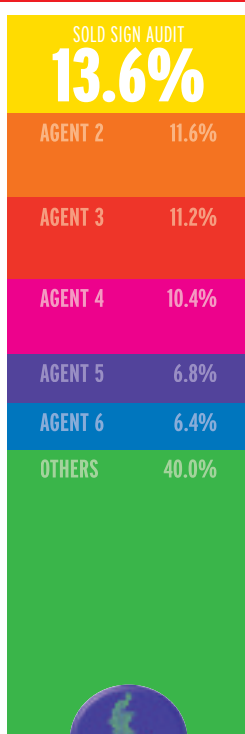
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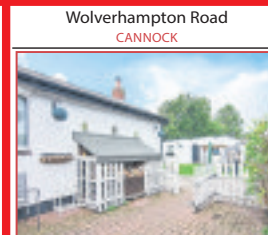
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Most extreme school run for Kodiah

British parents spend almost nine weeks of their lives ferrying kids to and from the school gates, according to new research from ŠKODA. And for many – over a third (36 per cent) of UK mums and dads – the 'school run' is the most stressful parental duty that they undertake.

However, whilst traffic (64 per cent) is the most common obstacle facing people on their daily commute, spare a thought for those living in the most remote parts of the UK. According to ŠKODA's study, in the furthest flung places such as the Scottish Highlands and Welsh Valleys, delays to school runs caused by hazards such as flooding rise by as much as 18 per cent against the national average (56 per cent vs 38 per cent).

Livestock on the roads also causes issues. In the county of Sutherland in the far north of Scotland, and in the mid Wales county of Ceredigion, an average of one in ten parents regularly has to stop to bypass rogue sheep and cattle – almost twice as often as any other rural location.

On the back of these figures, ŠKODA sought out the country's 'most extreme school run' – a nationwide search for the family facing the toughest terrain and obstacles – to put its brand new large SUV, the Kodiah, through its paces in the UK for the first time.

Step forward the Joneses, a farming family based in Pontrhydfendigaid, Ceredigion, Wales.

Nestled amongst stunning picture-postcard scenery, the Jones' land even features its own waterfall. However, despite beautiful appearances, their location also offers up problematic driving obstacles than cause



The children really enjoyed travelling in the Kodiaq



The off-road route features mud and water crossings



Part of the extreme run the Jones family has to make to get the children to school

the family delays of anywhere between ten minutes and two hours.

Dad William often has to use his chainsaw to help remove fallen trees, whilst ice and floods also present regular challenges – with a broken-down lorry blocking the road for two solid days last year. The Jones' cottage, Cwmmoiro, sits within its own micro-climate, meaning it can be snowing at home when it is raining at the children's school.

Mum Sarah Jones explained: "Every day

when we wake up we don't know what we're going to come up against on our school run, which is part of the fun of living up here really. We could take our horse Willow, but a 4x4 makes things so much easier."

Prior to its secretive arrival in Wales from the Czech Republic, the seven-seater ŠKODA Kodiaq had completed over a million miles of testing in some of the most extreme climates around the world. In what was a typically wet and windy day in Pontrhydfendigaid,

that testing was the perfect preparation. The Joneses got to experience the Kodiaq's outstanding 4x4 functionality, cutting across the valley via a slippery off-road route that features lots of mud and water crossings.

Sarah Jones concluded: "We were hugely impressed with the Kodiaq and our journey to school was the smoothest we've ever experienced. It tackled flooded areas and hills with ease and we enjoyed the headroom and nice little extras such as the heated seats. The

seven seats would definitely come in handy for collecting our children's school mates and when they're not being used, we can pop our dogs in the back. The kids really want us to buy one now!"

Watch the Jones' extreme school run here: skoda.uk/ExtremeSchoolRun

ŠKODA's first seven-seater SUV will start from just £21,495 and will be available in four trim levels with five engine options, two and four-wheel drive, and manual or DSG gearboxes.

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Official fuel consumption for the ŠKODA range in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 21.7 (13.0) to 72.4 (3.9), Extra Urban 40.4 (7.0) to 91.1 (3.1), Combined 30.4 (9.3) to 83.1 (3.4). CO₂ emissions for the ŠKODA range are 217 to 88g/km. Standard EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. #Available on a Solutions Personal Contract Plan. Finance subject to status. 18's and over. T&C's and exclusions apply. ŠKODA Financial Services. Valid until 31st December 2016, cars must be ordered and delivered in December. Stock vehicles only.

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2009 59	C4 VTR 1.4 5-Dr aircon low insurance great mpg low RFL look only 44930 miles.....	£3,499	2007 07	CLIO 1.2 CAMPAS 3-Dr alloy wheels MOT TILL 06/09/2017 ideal first car low insurance.....	£1,999
2010 60	DS3 1.6 VTI 120 BLACK Hatchback 3-Dr Petrol Manual Black 17" alloys aircon with 27077 mileage.....	£6,999	2011 11	MEGANE 1.5 DCI 110 DIESEL DYNAMIQUE TOM TOM 3-Dr COUPE SATNAV alloys aircon great MPG RFL=£30 for year.....	SOLD
2005 05	XSARA PICASSO DESIRE 2.0 HDI DIESEL 5-Dr alloy great value look only 74000 miles.....	£2,999	2010 10	MEGANE 1.5 DCI 110 DIESEL DYNAMIQUE TOM TOM 5-Dr SATNAV alloys aircon great MPG RFL=£30 for year.....	SOLD
2010 10	GRAND PICASSO C4 1.6 HDI DIESEL 110 EXCLUSIVE EGS AUTO 5-Dr 7 SEATS alloy wheels aircon parking 61220 miles.....	£5,999	2006 06	SCENIC 1.6 DYNAMIQUE 5-Dr alloy wheels aircon electric sports blue great value & MPG.....	£2,999
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2013 13	500 1.2 STREET 3-Dr in White, half leather seats black alloys aircon RFL=£30 only 24109 miles.....	£6,499	SMART		
2007 57	BRAVO ACTIVE 1.9 M-JET 120 DIESEL 5-Dr aircon great value family diesel hatch look only 50500 miles low tax.....	£3,499	2007 57	FORTWO PASSION 1.0 AUTOMATIC 3-Dr alloys aircon panoramic glass roof only 49700 miles great MPG RFL=£30.....	£2,999
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2012 62	PUNTO 1.4 GBT 3-Dr in White alloys aircon look only 27569 miles with history need viewing stunner.....	£5,999	SUZUKI		
FORD			2007 57	SK4 DDIS 1.9 DIESEL 5-Dr alloy wheels aircon look only 56374 miles rare worth a look.....	£2,999
2010 60	FIESTA 1.4 TITANIUM 5-Dr alloys aircon privacy glass cheap tax =£130 for year look only 32332 miles with history.....	£6,499	TOYOTA		
2010 10	FIESTA 1.2 EDGE 5-Dr aircon cheap tax =£110 for year look only 62000 miles.....	£4,999	2001 51	RAV4 D-4D GX 5-Dr alloys aircon nice spec cd/radio cheap 4x4 great value drives very well.....	£2,499
2012 12	FOCUS 2.0 TDCI DIESEL TITANIUM X 5-Dr Half leather trim 18" alloys parking sensors only 98528 miles with history.....	£7,999	VAUXHALL		
2008 08	FOCUS ST2 3-Dr in Orange alloys aircon 6 stamps in service book only 74500 miles find another lie this.....	£8,499	2006 06	CORSA 1.2 Sxi 3-Dr alloy wheels low insurance cheap RFL great MPG ideal first car.....	£1,999
2009 59	KUGA 2.0TDCI DIESEL TITANIUM 2WD 5-Dr half leather aircon privacy glass 18" alloys with history great value.....	£7,999	2012 62	ASTRA 1.7 CDTI DIESEL ACTIVE 5-Dr SATNAV half leather trim 17" alloys aircon 69988 miles full history RFL=£30.....	£6,999
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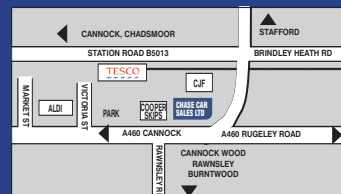
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New Ignis offers funky, good to drive small car

By Jon Reay

It's been nearly 10 years since the last of the previous generation Ignis rolled out of Suzuki's UK showrooms, and what a difference a decade has made.

While the old car managed to whip up a decent number of loyal customers over the seven years it was on sale, it'd be fair to say that it was a dull-but-worthy creation – well priced and equipped, but hardly the first word in desirability.

Suzuki is hoping that this distinctive-looking new car can succeed where the old car didn't, and provide a properly desirable alternative to European rivals.

On looks alone, the Ignis is off to a cracking start already and manages to pull off the chunky-yet-cute vibe very well indeed. There's no doubt it's a small car, but thanks to a squat stance and puffed-out wheel arches, it looks far more miniature-crossover than jumped-up city car – particularly compared to its rivals.

The interior is similarly impressive. Materials are what you'd expect from a Japanese city car – which is to say general hard to the touch and a bit flimsy here and there – but all the crucial elements like door handles and electric window switches feel pretty solid.

More importantly, the design is spot on, with brightly-coloured details and a two-tone dashboard lifting the ambience inside the Ignis considerably.



Boot space isn't huge but it's adequate

The Ignis is a comparatively tiny car but practicality is still surprisingly good. All cars get five doors, and rear passengers will find a surprising amount of head and leg room – enough for two adults to sit comfortably, particularly on SZ-T and SZ5 cars with their sliding rear seats.

Boot space isn't huge by any means at 260 litres with seats in position, but that's only 10 litres behind the larger Ka+^s. Selecting the optional four-wheel-drive system will knock that back to 204, however, and it's worth bearing in mind that only the entry-level SZ3 trim can seat five.

Safety is relatively good too, with the Ignis boasting a five star EuroNCAP rating for models equipped with Dual Camera Brake Support. Models without the feature get a three star rating, however.

There's just the one engine option: a 1.2-litre four-cylinder petrol borrowed from the Swift. It's not as perky as the 1.0-litre turbocharged 'Boosterjet' unit you'll find in the Baleno, but it's more than enough to propel the sub-one tonne Ignis along with ease. As in the Swift, it needs some revving to really get going, but if anything that adds to the Ignis's honest appeal.

Some cars get an SHVS 'mild' hybrid system too – effectively a way of regenerating the power used when you brake. Fitting this not only improves the Ignis's fuel economy a smidge, but knocks a few fractions of a second off the 0-60mph figure too.

You sit deliberately high in the Ignis, so visibility from the front and sides is excellent and jumping in and out is an ease. The steering wheel adjusts for rake but not reach, though it's still easy to get comfortable. Buttons and switches are logically laid out in front of you too, and although the touch screen navigation system isn't the most responsive around, it's easy enough to use.

The Ignis has been set up for comfort rather than sportiness – and that seems about right for a car of this type. Ride quality is good even on the larger 16-inch alloys, and things are remarkably stable on motorways.

Take things off the beaten path and things are similarly impressive. The Ignis's optional four-wheel-drive system isn't a particularly sophisticated one, but should be more than enough to get it across a muddy field with ease. It's hard to fault the Ignis on value for money – even entry-level SZ3 cars get plenty of toys. Air conditioning, front electric windows and a DAB radio with USB and Bluetooth connectivity are all thrown in.

When you consider that barely any other cars at this price can be fitted with four-wheel-drive too, the Ignis makes all the more sense – despite the fact that it's only available as an option on the top-spec SZ5 trim level.

Priced from £11,000.



On looks alone, the Ignis is off to a cracking start

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Baleno range mpg (litres/100km) and CO₂ emissions (g/km): Urban from 44.8-60.1 (6.3-4.7), Extra urban 68.8-78.4 (4.1-3.6), Combined 57.6-70.6 (4.9-4.0). **CO₂ emissions 115-94g/km.**
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15	SUZUKI SX SZA	In Black, Alloys, AC, P/Sensors, 23,000 miles	£5295	£5095	£200	14	107 ACTIVE 5-dr	RCL, EV, A/C, SH, £3 Tax, 20,000 miles	£4995	£4795	£200		
3	PIC 1.6 HDI	ARDREAM Alloys, AC, EV, SH, £30 Tax, 32,000 miles	£5295	£5095	£200	62	CLIO 1.2 DYN	Tom Tom, Alloys, AC, S/Nav, B/Tooth, 35,000 miles	£4995	£4795	£200		
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64	MICRA VISIA 1.2 5-dr	SH, BT, £30 Tax, 17,000 miles	£5595	£5395	£200	62	PICANTO 1.0 3-dr	RCL, EV, SH, £0 Road Tax, 32,000 miles	£4295	£3995	£300		
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13	NOTE NTEC	Alloys, Sat Nav, P/Sensors, 48,000 miles	£5695	£5495	£200	08	207 1.6 HDI SW ESTATE	Alloys, AC, P/P, Serv. History, 47,000 miles	£3895	£3695	£200		
60	ASTRA 1.6 SRI	AUTO Alloys, AC, B/Tooth, CC, SH, 35,000 miles	£5695	£5495	£200	55	OCTAVIA 1.6 EST	Alloys, AC, Leather, HF Seats, 46,000 miles	£3295	£2995	£300		
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The company is so engineering-led that it seems almost shy about the virtues of its range

Nothing frivolous, just a car meant to be taken seriously

By Ian Donaldson

SUBARU XV 2.0D SE PREMIUM, £26,995

SOMETIMES sporting glory can hang on a bit too long – you have to live with success years after your life headed in a different direction.

Or so we're told by honoured athletes who made the headlines some time ago but want to be known for what they're up to today.

If you think of Subaru at all it will be as a rally winner – only one in three people quizzed by the company associated the name with all-wheel drive cars.

Most of us still think Subaru means blue and gold rally cars pounding through forests at unlikely speeds. But the last time a Subaru won the world rally championship was ... in 1997.

These days the company – while naturally proud of its sporting achievements – would rather be known for more everyday virtues, like getting a Subaru owner to work or the school gates on the worst of winter roads.

Boxer

Well, the XV you see here would undoubtedly do all that – and carry a 12 bore and a saddle or two across a grass field to where the pheasants were hiding, or the horses waited for their exercise.

Subaru has ploughed a lonely furrow in design terms, sticking to its mantra of all-wheel drive and horizontally opposed 'boxer' engines that keep their weight low down, which ought to help on corners.

The company is so engineering-led that it seems almost shy about the virtues of its range – so reliable and long lived that dealers must wish more went wrong with the cars and they came back to see them more often.

It's shy about telling the world when it makes changes too. The car you see here was mildly updated earlier in 2016, but I bet you didn't know.

Nothing too drastic, with small improvements to fuel consumption of both engines on offer – 2.0 petrol and diesel – a very gentle upgrade inside with metallic and piano black and

contrast stitching upping perceived quality, while outside you might spot a new boot spoiler, grille and bumper aimed at a more rugged look.

Most buyers go for the diesel and will appreciate its improved fuel consumption (up from 50.4mpg to 52.3mpg) and lowered CO2 figures, down from 146g/km to 141g/km, which also drops the business user tax band to 25 per cent.

Performance remains unchanged, with the diesel topping out at 124mph and hitting 62mph in 9.3 seconds – both figures likely to be less important to potential buyers than the 46.5mpg seen on a test drive over a mix of roads.

Longer gear ratios and slightly sharper steering are the sort of subtle improvements you might expect from Subaru and they duly appear on this latest XV, which ranges in price from £21,995 for a 2.0 petrol model to £26,995 for the 2.0 diesel tested here in SE Premium trim.

There are two trim levels, SE and SE Premium. Every XV has automatic air-conditioning, 17-inch alloy wheels, daytime running lights, heated

front seats and a Subaru Starlink infotainment system that comes with a seven inch touchscreen that includes satellite navigation on the top spec.

The top of the range SE Premium adds a sun roof, keyless entry (keep the key in your pocket), powered driver's seat, leather seats and the sat nav.

Subaru continues its all-wheel drive philosophy in the XV, with all four wheels translating underbonnet action into forward motion, all the time. So snowy roads or muddy tracks should hold no terrors, so long as the car has enough ground clearance available.

If it sounds like a thoroughly practical sort of machine, then you've caught the mood of the XV. Which means there's nothing frivolous about the interior, where solid, durable plastic is favoured over anything hinting at boutique style. That means its either drab or sensible, depending on taste.

But this is car that's meant to be taken seriously. A five year warranty shows that Subaru is serious too.



Most buyers go for the diesel and will appreciate its improved fuel consumption

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New challenger in the popular SUV market

By Ian Donaldson

Destined to become one of the core models of this outpost of the currently troubled VW Group empire, the Ateca is the first shot in an SUV campaign that will see a smaller sibling arrive sometime in 2017.

They can't come quickly enough as industry watchers confidently predict we will all soon be fighting for the keys to an SUV shaped family transporter.

These built-tall-and-but-ch machines are headed in the sales charts by the Nissan Qashqai. The marketing people say an Ateca is likely to cost you up to three per cent less than an equivalent Qashqai. Take that Nissan!

Even so, in a market where emotion rules over simple cost calculations, it might take more than a useful price advantage to persuade people into the SEAT offering.

So designing a car that looks neat, stylish and modern is a good starter. And it does, with crisp lines and a suitably grown up stance, the Ateca scores well in the car park stakes.

Inside, it could comfortably have come from either Skoda or Volkswagen, with the same no nonsense approach to driving that makes those two marques such a sensible choice to people who like their cars simply to work in an uncomplicated way.

It's not quite in Audi interior territory; although as carefully screwed together (by Skoda in the Czech Republic), it lacks the German brand's ultimate layer of glitz. It also costs thousands less, of course.



Open the tailgate and there's a decent boot space

So perhaps SEAT has found its role in life, to offer a reasonably priced alternative to more obvious names, with a dusting of Spanish design elan in the mix.

Propelling the new Ateca is a familiar mix of two petrol and three diesel engines, with a potentially frugal 1.0 litre petrol at the entry level, from £17,990 and a £29,990 2.0 litre diesel auto with on demand four-wheel drive at the summit. In fact, should you want either all-wheel drive or automatic gears you'll have to head for a 2.0 diesel, although SEAT thinks likely best sellers are 1.4 TSI petrol (in top XCELLENCE trim) and 2.0 TDI 150 for private buyers with fleet users gravitating to an SE 1.6 TDI Ecotivate.

The Ateca might look capable of modest off-roading, a primary attraction of SUVs even if they venture no further than a kerb in the Waitrose car park, but a modest 15 per cent of them will have SEAT's 4Drive fitted.

More important to more buyers will be the techie bits inside the car that let you fully integrate your mobile phone, regardless of make and, standard on every Ateca, emergency braking that stops you in low speed likely collisions if you're not paying attention.

Open the tailgate and you'll find a boot that is a bit bigger than the Qashqai's and can be turned into a fine attempt at a van by easily flopping the rear seatback forward.

Venture into any of the SEAT's seats (sorry) and you could be in any of the recent similarly sized products from the VW Group. Take that as a compliment and tribute to a colossal research and development budget that makes any SEAT (or VW, Audi or Skoda) so comfortably easy to drive.

The driver is faced by a dashboard that favours simplicity and sense over glitz and is all the better for it. You might call it just a touch dull but there's no doubting it all works well.

So does the car when you head out for a drive, powered by the likely private buyer's favourite 1.4 litre petrol engine in a £21,015 Ateca SE. Its 150 horsepower and willingness to rev politely mean there's enough overtaking potential to mean an Ateca packed with people and holiday luggage won't feel out of its depth.

The ride is on the firmish side but that means this car feels reasonably crisp when you ask it to change direction, which is what you hope a family friendly SUV will provide. It also showed 42mpg after a modestly demanding test drive, with a switch to a 150 horsepower diesel with 4Drive in XCELLENCE trim doing better, at 53mpg but topping £30,000 with a few extras on board.

The sweet spot of the range is probably the 1.4 petrol version, especially if you are unlikely to rack up interstellar mileages, where a diesel is the more sensible choice.



The Ateca has been designed as neat, stylish and modern

TOWER Motors

Wishing all our customers a Merry Christmas

Quality Cars at Affordable Prices!

SALOONS - HATCHBACKS -

2013 63	FIAT 500 COLOUR THERAPY Baby Blue, 1 owner, 20,000 miles, Service History, E/Windows, C/Locking, Stop Start etc	£6495
2012 62	NISSAN JUKE 1.6 ACENTA 5-door, Metallic Red, 17" Alloys, Climate Control, Cruise Control, E/Windows, C/Locking, only 24,000 miles	£7995
2012 12	MINI ONE 1.6 White, One Owner, E/Windows, C/Locking, 17in Alloys, CD Player etc.....	£6495
2011 61	RENAULT CLIO DYNAMIQUE Tom Tom 3-door, Black, Alloys, Sat Nav, Air Con, E/Windows, C/Locking, Only 32,000 miles.....	£4795
2011 11	CITROEN C3 VTR+ 1.4 Metallic Grey, 30,000 miles, Alloys, Air Con, Panoramic Roof, E/Windows, C/Locking	£4995
2010 10	FORD MONDEO 1.8 TDCi 5 door, only 76,000 miles, Full History, Air Con, Cruise, E/Windows, C/Locking	£5899
2010 10	FORD FIESTA ZETEC 1.6 TDCi DIESEL Metallic Red, Alloys, Air Con, C/Windows, 20 Tax, Service History	£4995
2010 10	RENAULT TWINGO 1.1 FREEWAY Metallic Blue, E/Windows, PAS, C/Locking.....	£3695
2009 59	FORD FOCUS 1.6 ZETEC 5dr, Black, 2 owners, Service History, E/Windows, C/Locking, HFS, Air Con	£4995
2009 59	VW PASSAT DSG CC 4-door Coupe, Black, C/Locking, E/Windows, A/C, Alloys, etc	£7995
2008 08	FORD FOCUS STYLE 1.8 TDCi 5dr, Metallic Green, Air Con, Alloys, PAS, C/Locking, E/Windows, Service History	£3995
2008 08	PEUGEOT 207 S HDI SW ESTATE, Metallic Grey, One Owner, Full Dealer History, C/Locking, E/Windows, Panoramic Roof.....	£3995
2008	TOYOTA YARIS 1.3 SR NAV 5-Door, Red, Private Plate, Alloys, Air Con, Sat Nav, E/Windows, C/Locking, Only 44,000 miles	£3995
2007 57	SMART PURE 1.0 Facelift Model, White, C/Locking, CD Player, Only 33,000 miles	£2995
2005 05	PEUGEOT 307s CC CABRIOLET Metallic Grey, E/Roof, E/Windows, C/Locking	£2295

AUTOMATIC

2009 59	VW PASSAT DSG CC 4-door Coupe, Black, C/Locking, E/Windows, A/C, Alloys, etc	£7995
2009 09	FIAT GRANDE PUNTO ACTIVE 1.4 Auto, White, 5-door, PAS, C/Locking, E/Windows, CD Player, Full Service History	£3995

AUTOMATICS BOUGHT FOR CASH!!

MOTORHOME

2014 14	DFSK LOADHOPPER Silver, Only 6,000 miles, Partly converted to Motorhome, Save Thousands!	£6495
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MOTORHOMES BOUGHT FOR CASH!!

4x4 AND MPVs

2010 59	SKODA YETI 2.0 CR Diesel, 4x4, Silver, One Owner, Full Skoda History, E/Windows, C/Locking, Air Con, Alloys, etc	£8995
2008 08	HONDA CRV 2.2 DCI 4x4 Metallic Grey, Alloys, C/Locking, E/Windows, Air Con etc	£6995
2005 05	TOYOTA RAV 4 D4D XTR TURBO DIESEL Silver, Air Con, Alloys, E/Windows, C/Locking, E/Sunroof, CD Player, Excellent Condition ..	£4995
2005 05	TOYOTA RAV4 XTR VVTi 5-door, Silver, Only 52,000 miles, Excellent Condition, A/C, E/Windows, C/Locking, E/Sunroof, Alloys	£4995

View all our cars online
www.towermotors.co.uk

Tel: 01543 42 42 43

Pye Green Road, Hednesford, Cannock WS12 4LL

We're under the Tower! Edge of Cannock Chase!

Mon-Fri 9.30 am-5 pm
Sat 9 am-4.30 pm
Sun Closed
Closed Christmas Eve,
Christmas Day &
Boxing Day

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For items up to **£250**

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Simply press the free ad icon. Sorry, no pets, guns or livestock. Private advertisers only.

Place a paid for advert

By Phone 01902 317878
8.30am - 5.30pm Mon - Fri.
Closed Sat/Sun and Bank Holidays

Online
bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

In person
At your local Express & Star Office. Cancel/amend, call before 3.00pm Monday - Friday for the next day's advertisement or also before 3.00pm Friday for Monday's advertisement.

1 Family

elderly & disabled

WREKIN STAIRLIFTS reconditioned lifts from £799. New available. 01952 405397/07897 273617

2 Leisure Time

boats & water sports

OUTBOARD MOTOR WANTED, anything considered, reasonably priced. 01922 49321.

bikes

JACKSON-HATELEY CYCLES
www.jacksonshateleycycles.co.uk

GIGANTIC CYCLE CLEARANCE
Massive Christmas giveaway. Book your Cycle for Christmas at sale price. All cycles built and guaranteed with a 24 hour repair service. All spares and accessories at discount price.

HATELEY'S
Simply the best thing you can do on 01902 782344 458 Bedford Road, Oxley, Wolverhampton

caravans / motorhomes

We Want Your Motorhome
Finance Cleared
Fast Secure Payment
Top Prices Paid
Please Call
AEG on 01384 848439 or
Lee Jinks on 07740 895448
www.aegmotorhomes.co.uk

FOR SALE WILLERBY GRANADA
2005 double glazing/central heating, decking, bargain £12,995, 07462 343 698

MOVE IN BY THE NEW YEAR!!
Own your own holiday home on stunning seaside holiday park. 12 month season, fantastic facilities. Call Paul on 07960 944721.

STATIC CARAVANS for sale on beautiful seaside holiday park. 12 month season, 2017 site fees inc. Finance available. TAC's apply. Call Paul on 07960 944721.

WINTER CARAVAN for sale. Quick sale needed. Sited on Brynwen Holiday Park. Weekend and evening viewings available. Call or text 07493 108554.

sports & leisure

Free Ads

IT'S FREE, IT'S EASY
For items up to £250.
Online at
bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

holidays

caravan holidays

NEW & USED STATIC CARAVANS for sale on award winning Country Holiday Park on the Staffordshire / Shropshire border. For details call Tony on 01902 851 302

SEA SIDE SOMERSET HOLIDAY caravans to let. Half price OAPs. All caravans overlook the sea 01984 631 781 www.helwellbay.com

devon

PAIGNTON
The Kingswinford
Dec - March offer
3 Nights B&B - £69 pp
Evening Meals on request

FAMILY ROOMS AVAILABLE
CHILD DISCOUNTS
All rooms en suite
100 yards to beach and pier
Contractors Welcome
01803 558358
www.kingswinfordhotel.com

mind, body & soul

clairvoyance

CLAIRVOYANT JOHN STARKEY
Appointments, Home visits & Telephone readings 01902 334 224

massage

FULL BODY MASSAGE 30 mins £21, 40 mins £26, 1 hour £36. Shower facilities. 01902 782960.

3 Home & Services

furniture

BFC FURNITURE
OUR BIGGEST EVER SALE
Plus interest. Free Credit 0% apr
STARTS BOXING DAY

SCARPIA LARGE CORNER SOFA BY LAURENCE LLEWELYN BOWEN
NSP £1199
SALE £749

TUBCHAIRS IN BLACK, BROWN, RED
NSP £199
SALE £99

EVE MATTRESSES (AS SEEN ON TV)
SINGLE WAS £349 **SALE £149**
DOUBLE WAS £549 **SALE £249**
KING WAS £629 **SALE £279**

HUNDREDS OF BED FRAMES, DIVANS AND MATTRESSES TO TAKE AWAY.
Single matts from £39
Double matts from £59
King matts from £79

OTTOMAN FAUX LEATHER LIFT UP STORAGE BEDFRAME IN EXPRESSO BROWN.
SINGLE NSP £399 **SALE £199**
DOUBLE NSP £499 **SALE £249**
KING NSP £599 **SALE £299**

Open Everyday 10am-6pm
OPEN SUNDAY 10AM - 4PM

BFC FACTORY OUTLET
CONVEYER ROAD, RD 157, GREAT BRIDGE RD, Tipton DY8 5XP.
VISA OFF A461 2 MINS FROM NEW 1950 & 1970 CARAVANS
0121 557 6885
BIG CHOICE OF DINING FURNITURE

antiques

ANTIQUES WANTED
All Furniture, Clocks, China, Medals, Coins, Paintings, Gold & Silver Jewellery
HOUSE CLEARANCE SERVICE
CHASE ANTIQUES
(Over 35 years Trading)
01543 572367 07831 818024

Louis Taylor
Fine Art Auctioneers & Valuers
Antique valuations first Wednesday of every month, 10am - 2pm
Ancient High House Museum, Stafford, ST16 2JA
01782 638100

in your garden

SLABS 450mm x 450mm RIVEN FACED, only £1.76 inc. VAT.
Ranton Building Supplies:
01543 276006.

items for sale

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

ASH RECLAMATION new and used building materials, upvc doors and windows 01543 453222.

items wanted

ALL GOLD 9CT £300 PER OUNCE CASH PAID TODAY
No amount is too small
A GENUINE LADY BUYER
All Beswick • Doulton • Worcester Moorcroft • Lladro • Old coins
• WATCHES • COSTUME JEWELLERY
• Diamonds and Gold Coins • Clocks • Paintings
• ALL SILVER • All Oriental Items
Pre 47 silver coins All new models
• ANYTHING OLD & INTERESTING
01922 495066 or 07971 783206

A BEST CASH PRICE PAID for antiques, vintage furniture, leather-winged arm chairs & chesterfield settees.
01902 454144 or 0121 5263375

WANTED ANY OLD TOOLS CASH PAID
Hand tools, anything considered.
01543 452491 / 07539 340307

READERS ARE ADVISED to carefully consider all of their options before agreeing to the sale of any of their items.

t.v. / home entertainment

service

AERIAL AND TV SPECIALIST
Any TV Repairs, Plasma, LED etc. CCTV cameras supplied & fitted. Any area. Free Estimates. 7 days. Digital aerials, Sky installation. Wall mounts / TV setups. 07850 330251.

specialists at your service

aerials

AA DIGITAL AERIALS
SATELLITE & CCTV
AERIALS FITTED FROM £75
Work Guaranteed
01902 558191 01384 429166
01543 439095 01922 716029 07833 738857

ClassifiedAds
BUY LOCAL, SELL LOCAL

CLASSIFIEDS HELPED ME...
I am very pleased with the response I get from my Classified Advertising Contract

Steve -
AA Digital Aerials

FOR GREAT BUSINESS RESULTS CALL
01902 319 191
Brought to you by Express & Star

bathrooms

JRI Bathrooms & Wetrooms
Over 20 years experience in bathroom & kitchen installations.
TILING / PLASTERING / FREE QUOTES
07392 379741 or 01543 529648

building supplies

RECLAIMED BRICKS, Tiles, Slates, Oakbeams, Flooring, York Stone, Cawarden 01889 574066. sales@cawardenreclaim.co.uk

carpet fitters

A CARPETS & VINYLs supplied or just fitted, quality samples brought to your home, no job too small, free quotes call Mark 01543 820598/07941 619694.

cleaning

Sparkle Clean
Cleaning Services
A standard of Excellence
Office or Household cleaning
Discounted rates for regular customers
FREE Enquiries & quotes call
07818 238893 CRB checked

double glazing repairs

S.P.S. windows, doors, glass units, locks, hinges, repairs / renewal, guaranteed. Call 07983 704889.

christmas trees/wreaths

CHRISTMAS TREES
Nordmann Fir from £20
with FREE mistletoe Holly Wreaths from £5.
opp HOLLY BUSH GARDEN CENTRE EXIT, J11 M6.
Open 7 days a week

fencing

PORTWAY FENCING
SPECIAL OFFER
10 bags of quality fencing, 1 concrete post, gravel boards £695
HEAVY DUTY PANELS SUPPLIED AND FITTED
0121 531 5250 / 07866 137 656
Mon - Fri 9am - 4.30pm
Sat 9am - 12noon
83 Portway Rd, W'bury
www.portwayfencing.co.uk

gardening services

OAKTREE TREE SERVICES
Covers all aspects of tree surgery, grass cutting and hedges. Garden clearances, turfing and fencing
07427 060382

Landywood Tree & Landscaping Services
All garden work, tree felling/lopping, pruning, hedges trimmed, turf, patios, fencing, block-paving etc.
www.landywoodlandscaping.co.uk
01922 898 710 / 07973 177 976

gas fitting

READERS ARE ADVISED To check that anyone carrying out any Gas work is Gas Safe Registered. It is an offence under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to carry out gas work in the UK without being on the Gas Safe Register.

house clearances

ALL ROUND CLEARANCE
Professional family run business
House clearances, full or part, also garages, sheds etc.
Telephone Key
07794 912844

kitchen fitters

THE KITCHEN FITTER
• Over 20 years' experience in kitchen fitting & project managing.
• Specialist in fitting all retail kitchens.
• Very competitive price.
• Quick quotes over the phone can be given if preferred.
• Supply now available!
CONTACT MATT ON 07881 654 757 or 01543 373 233

painters / decorators

DECORACE Painter & Decorator. Quality work at reasonable prices. OAP discounts. Free quotes 01902 635258 07876 135302.

plastering

M & S PLASTERING & BUILDING Services. Home/Garden Improvements. Mark or Sara: 07741 770897

plumbing & heating

PLUMBING WORK UNDERTAKEN No job too small or large. Call Will for a free quote on: 07521 411108.

removals

CALL DEAN NOW: For all your Removal needs. 07429 453209/ 01902 830670 / 01384 940260.

FURNITURE REMOVALS We beat any quote, full or part loads, all areas. Call Keith on 07867 862227.

KT HOUSE REMOVALS
12 years experience.
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL LOADS.
LOCAL OR DISTANCE. FULLY INSURED.
Free Quotes - Call Ric on:
07771 727119

roofing

CLIFF NICHOLLS
Roofing & Scaffolding
Rubber Roofing
All Roofing and Scaffolding Work carried out.
35 years experience
Freephone
(0800) 220 - 729

upholstery

MR B'S UPHOLSTERY
RE-UPHOLSTERING OF SOFAS, DINING FURNITURE, CARAVANS, CAR RETRIMS AND MORE.
www.mrbsupholstery.co.uk
01543 500677 07738 851601

4 Pets & Animals

equestrian corner

ALL READERS are advised to check if horses have the required Passport information.

guns & dogs

vets

Express & Star

THIS SPACE COULD BE PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS

Every day our customers get a great response from Classified Advertising.

So could you by calling our friendly experienced Sales Advisors on 01902 319191.

pets corner

JACK RUSSELL X Chihuahua Puppies, girls only. £130. 07722 683466 after 4pm.

MALINOIS BELGIAN Shepherd pups two dogs, 12 weeks, chipped, vac's, wormed to date. Ideal Family pet. £350. 0794 9943933.

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer.

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with its Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering any obligations.

business directory

commercial premises

STORAGE UNITS TO LET
800sqft and 1600sqft.
Burntwood area.
Ring Michael Bailey,
07538 867585.

6 Property

accommodation to let

NOTICE TO READERS It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

overseas property

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

properties wanted

Need to sell your home fast?
We can help you make a fresh start
With solutions to suit...
you can clear your debts and make a fresh start

Purchase Agreed Within 7 DAYS
ALL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED.
COMPLETE ON DATE TO SUIT
FREE VALUATION AND LEGALS
FREE FRIENDLY ADVICE
LOCAL COMPANY

MARION | PROPERTY SOLUTIONS
WHY NOT CALL US TODAY
for an informal, friendly and confidential chat?
01543 241 239 *Terms and Conditions apply
OUR LINES ARE OPEN 24/7

Home Cash Buyer
Sell today, sign today, complete when u wish
£££ RENT BACK OPTIONS £££
Houses / Land Required
Ring Paul 24/7 Local **07870 341 089**
Sandwell area: Call 0121 696 4154
Walsall & Cannock area: Call 01922 432049
Wolverhampton: Call 01902 489901
www.homecashbuyer.co.uk

ClassifiedAds BUY LOCAL, SELL LOCAL

CLASSIFIEDS HELPED ME...

We have been advertising in the Express & Star and Chronicle for over 20 years and consider it a key part of our business with the regular flow of calls, which our advertising generates.

Black Country Homes

FOR GREAT BUSINESS RESULTS CALL 01902 319 191 Brought to you by **Express & Star**

ClassifiedAds BUY LOCAL, SELL LOCAL

CLASSIFIEDS HELPED ME...

"I am really pleased with the response I get from my Classified Advertising!"
Paul Westwood - Home Cash Buyer

FOR GREAT BUSINESS RESULTS CALL 01902 319 191 Brought to you by **Express & Star**

7 Jobs

nursing & carers

EXPERIENCED DAY AND NIGHT CARE STAFF

For a small special needs residential home in the Burntwood area

Hours negotiable

Please call

01543 672552

engineering

CNC MILLING / TURNING PROGRAMMER with FANUC controls for engineering company in Cannock. 40+ hours p.w. Pay negotiable depending on experience. Possible shift work. Call Tim on 01543 577515 or 07815 207977

8 Motoring

cars under £1500

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

BARGAIN
FORD FOCUS
2003, 1.6, 5-dr hatch, petrol.
MoT June 2017,
£350 ono.
01922 626560.

BARGAIN
PEUGEOT 206
Silver, 1.4 petrol, V Reg., nine months MoT, 80,000 miles, alloy wheels, good, clean condition, many new parts.
£375 o.n.o.
07502 022729.

cars over £1500

CHEVROLET SPARK PLUS
62 reg, MoT August 2017, 5 door, fsh, light blue, 13,700 miles, still under warranty, lady owner, cheap tax, low insurance group.
£3,300 ono.
Telephone 07984 207513.

BARGAIN
FORD FOCUS ESTATE
Ghia, red, FSH.
Good condition.
Great Family car.
long MoT, all electric.
176,000 miles
hence only **£1,800 ono.**
01785 213806

KIA CARENS 2.0LGS
09 reg, 71,000 miles, silver, 7 seater, electric windows, alarm, MoT June 2017, central locking, pas, alloys, stereo, CD. New tyres, fsh.
£1,950.
01922 418083.

TOYOTA VERSO S
2012, 14,878 miles, black, electric windows, air bag, air con, fsh, alarm, MoT, auto, central locking, pas, rear view camera. Bluetooth
£7,000 ono
07491 101100.

driving tuition

Homer's
10 Hours £125! Four Hours £40! 2 Hours £20! All Areas Covered
AD/PD REQUIRED. Gift vouchers available for £10
07432 485100 / 01562 970050
01384 234954 / 0121 5640090
01902 580085 www.homersdrivingschool.co.uk

scrap vehicles

OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded that it is an offence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy scrap cars/metal for cash.

MCB
TOP PRICES PAID FOR ALL SCRAP CARS, VANS, BIKES, CLASSICS
Tel: 01902 408176
1000's of parts available at all times
MONMORE RD, WV1 2TZ

vehicles wanted

CROWN MOTORS guarantee best price for your unwanted cars/vans. 07903 543949, buyer will call.

spares & accessories

mobile mechanics

MOBILE MECHANICS Service & repairs. Headgasket, clutches and cambelts. 07747 848469.

9 Local Information

public & legal notices

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES
For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to
Marie Hogg on 01902 713146
or email **marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk** (remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

JANET MARY DOBSON (Deceased)
Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 125 Bower Lane, Rugeley, Staffordshire, WS15 2TS, who died on 27/04/2016, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned on or before 24/02/2017, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.
CO-OP LEGAL SERVICES LIMITED
Aztec 650 Aztec West
Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4SD
(Ref: MXD/3812149P/Dobson) 7489535

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NOTICE OF CONFIRMATION OF AN ORDER
PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION AND DEFINITIVE MAP & STATEMENT MODIFICATION ORDER
HIGHWAYS ACT 1980
WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981
PUBLIC FOOTPATH NO. 0.799 (PART) CANNOCK TOWN
PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION AND DEFINITIVE MAP & STATEMENT MODIFICATION ORDER 2016

On 29 November 2016 Staffordshire County Council confirmed the above Order made under section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, which diverted that length of public footpath commencing from its junction with Public Footpath No. 0.800/0.801 Cannock Town at grid reference 403196 309858 and heading in a generally northerly direction for approximately 884 metres to its junction with Public Footpath No. 65 Cannock Town at grid reference 403012 310701; to a new line running from its junction with Public Footpath No. 0.800/0.801 Cannock Town at grid reference 403162 309824 in a generally north-north-westerly direction for approximately 86 metres to grid reference 403131 309901 then heading in a generally east-north-easterly direction for approximately 56 metres to grid reference 403178 309933 before heading in a generally northerly direction for approximately 70 metres to grid reference 403156 309998. The footpath then heads in a generally east-north-easterly for approximately 244 metres to grid reference 403376 310100 before turning to head in a generally northerly direction for approximately 617 metres to its junction with Public Footpath No. 65 Cannock Town at grid reference 403235 310694.

A copy of the Order and Order maps have been placed and may be seen free of charge at Cannock Chase County Council, Civic Suite, Beecroft Road, Cannock, WS11 1BG during normal opening hours and at the offices of Staffordshire County Council, Corporate Reception, 1 Staffordshire Place, Stafford from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm from 22 December 2016 to 2 February 2017. Copies of the Orders and maps may be bought there at the price of 10p per A4 page; £2 per map.

The Order comes into force on 3 February 2017 but if a person aggrieved by the order wishes to question its validity, or that of any provision contained in it, on the ground that it is not within the powers of the Highways Act 1980, as amended, or on the ground that any requirement of the Act, as amended, or of any regulation made under the Act, had not been complied with in relation to the Order he or she may, under paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Act, as applied by paragraph 5 of Schedule 6 to the Act, within six weeks from the date of publication of this notice, make an application to the High Court.

John Tradewell, Director of Strategy, Governance and Change
2 Staffordshire Place, Stafford. ST16 2DH
Dated: 22 December 2016

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 (AS AMENDED)
ROAD TRAFFIC (TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS) ACT 1991
DIVERSION OF VEHICULAR TRAFFIC
SANDY LANE, HATHERTON

NOTICE is hereby given that the Staffordshire County Council intend not less than seven days from the date of this Notice to make an Order the effect of which will be to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding in that length of Sandy Lane in Hatherton, between its junctions with Church Lane and Hutton Road unless the vehicle is being used in connection with the works or unless the vehicle requires access to premises on the length of road. There will be no through route available and pedestrian access will be unaffected.

An alternative route for traffic is available via Church Lane, Parkside Lane, Sandy Lane and vice versa. For more information, visit: <https://roadworks.org?tm=89623>

The order will come into operation on 12th January 2017 and the said works will commence on or as near as practicable to that date. It is anticipated that the works will be completed on the same day.

The Order will remain in force for a period of 18 months or until the vegetation clearance and tree felling works which it is proposed to carry out on or near the road have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

John Tradewell, Director for Strategy, Governance & Change
No. 2 Staffordshire Place, Tipping Street, Stafford. ST16 2DH
Ref: 31719 Enquiries: Customer Contact Centre; Tel: 0300 111 8000
www.staffordshire.gov.uk/trafficregulationorders <http://roadworks.org>
Date: 22nd December 2016

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 (AS AMENDED)
ROAD TRAFFIC (TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS) ACT 1991
TEMPORARY 30 M.P.H. SPEED RESTRICTION
A51 LEA HALL WAY, RUGELEY

NOTICE is hereby given that the Staffordshire County Council intend not less than seven days from the date of this Notice to make an Order the effect of which will be to impose a 30 M.P.H. speed restriction on A51 Lea Hall Way in Rugeley from the roundabout with Wheelhouse Road for a distance of approximately 900 metres travelling in a north westerly direction towards the roundabout with Power Station Road.

For more information, visit: <https://roadworks.org?tm=93021>

The order will come into operation on 9 January 2017 and the said works will commence on or as near as practicable to that date. It is anticipated that the works will be completed by 26 May 2017.

The Order will remain in force for a period of 18 months, or until the Section 278 new roundabout construction and associated works, which it is proposed to carry out on or near the road have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

John Tradewell, Director for Strategy, Governance & Change
No. 2 Staffordshire Place, Tipping Street, Stafford. ST16 2DH
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Connor Newell, aged 14 from Willenhall, practises in the water



Young club member Jaden Davies, aged seven



Chloe Hall, aged 12, gets to work in the pool



Swimming club members are now making a big splash

Swimming club hoping for new wave of interest

SPORTING FEATURE

By Lewis Cox

HEATH Town Swimming Club boast a long and illustrious history – and are now appealing for ‘fresh blood’ in a bid to keep the club afloat.

The ASA-affiliated outfit have been a registered club for 83 years, and several of their volunteers and have been involved for around half of that time.

They have seen good and bad times, riding the wave of great highs and plunging to the depths of difficult lows.

One of those lows arrived when their home – Bushbury Swimming Baths in Wolverhampton – was forced to close in November 2006.

Numbers dwindled but, thanks to a few hardy souls that kept the club going at other baths, the Heath Town club lived on.

“I think we were down to just 16 swimmers at that time,” said Sheila Ratcliffe, aged 69, a former welfare officer and now assistant coach at the club.

Important

“Keeping it running was so important because once a club folds then it’s very difficult to get it started back up again.”

It was the dedication of Ratcliffe and the committee that helped keep the club afloat.

They moved on to Wolverhampton Swimming and Fitness Centre shortly after and began building from the bottom again.

Ratcliffe, who has been helping out for 42 years, estimates there are around 200 members now connected with the club. But while that sounds impressive, she warns many of those are non-swimmers and some do not attend regularly.

They train on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings and use both the larger and smaller pool at the facility. “Numbers dwindle with kids in the sum-



Heath Town Swimming Club coach Rob Bonner at Wolverhampton Swimming & Fitness Centre

“Keeping it running was so important because once a club folds then it’s very difficult to get it started back up again.”

mer holidays but we expect that,” she said. “We need about 35 in the big pool and 20 in the little pool to pay the centre, it’s quite expensive.

“We cater for beginners and improvers and then they go into the big pool where we train with six lanes – our head coach Rob Bonner is a Level Two coach.”

Like Ratcliffe, Bonner’s association with the club began as merely ‘a parent’. Taking their children along to learn how to swim quickly turned into a hobby and a passion.

But Ratcliffe, originally from Wednesfield but who now lives in Willenhall, reflects the will to volunteer at a sports club is not what it once was. “We’ve adver-

tised for new volunteers or coaches – that we’d happily pay – to help keep our club going but people have too many other things to do these days,” she said.

“It’s not like it used to be. We also have Margaret Bennion, Alan Robinson and Joan Jarvis help out as volunteer coaches and they’ve been doing it nearly as long as me.

“The president, secretary and treasurer are all here but we’re all getting on and we need youngsters to step in, we need fresh blood.”

Club president is Ray Green, awarded the MBE four years ago for services to schools and swimming. His wife Sheila is secretary and Malcolm Foley – who used to swim with Ratcliffe’s daughter Wendy – is treasurer. “You can see how it is, we’ve all been here for a while and we love it and enjoy it but it is difficult,” Ratcliffe conceded.

“I never thought I’d be here all these decades later after bringing my children. If it wasn’t for my youngest grandson Connor coming to swim I might not have still been involved. But looking at it, it’s my passion and my hobby. We’ve been associated for so long, we just do it for the love.”

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Seven up as gap at the top shortens

Burntwood 49 Uttoxeter 17
BURNWOOD go into the festive break having secured a seventh league win on the trot to edge a point closer to league leaders Ludlow.

They were not quite at their best but still ran in eight tries to two with Luke Rookyard claiming a hat-trick. He rewarded a good start by the hosts with a trademark try from a close range line out after just five minutes.

Seven minutes later, from a maul on the 22, Brett Taylor caught the Uttoxeter guard defence napping to race unopposed to the posts, Sam Lloyd converted.

On 20 minutes, Aza Dunet touched down in the clubhouse corner before Uttoxeter got off the mark with a penalty goal from 30 metres out.

Burntwood's bonus point try came on 32 minutes, with Neil Holden touching down. Dunet put a fine conversion over for a 24-3 lead.

In time added on the visitors seized on a handling error for a converted try.

Four minutes into the second period Lloyd extended the lead with a penalty goal and after 52 minutes Rookyard went in for his second try. He then completed his hat trick with the best try of the afternoon, which Dunet converted.

Ben Holt was next on the scoresheet for Burntwood, and with 10 minutes to go, Lloyd was able to score out wide.

Replacement Liam Smith saw yellow in the time remaining and within a minute Uttoxeter exploited the gap in midfield left by his absence to score a converted try under the posts.

On January 7, Burntwood are at home to neighbours Cannock, the 2nds are at Leek and the 3rds host Newcastle.

It's Captain's Ramble on Boxing Day - meet at the clubhouse by 10.30 am for a leisurely stroll around Chasewater before returning for food and refreshment.

Sponsor comes up with second ring for boxing club

GREAT Wyrley ABC received an early Christmas present from their sponsor James Evans Financial Services in the shape of a new boxing ring and T-shirts for their members.

Head coach Pete Hickenbottom said: "Chris Evans, who has sponsored the club for over four years, came to train at the gym the other week and seeing the numbers in the gym decided we could do with a second boxing ring so that the boxers weren't hanging around waiting to spar.

"It has been a marvellous asset to the gym and has been getting plenty of use since its installation.

"He also splashed out on new training shirts for the members as well. Once again he has spent well on the boxing club for which myself and the rest of the boxers are forever grateful."

"This year alone he has brought us equipment totalling thousands of pounds as boxing equipment is, as any boxing coach will tell you, very expensive."

Great Wyrley ABC, which next month celebrates its 18th anniversary, is closed until Wednesday, January 4.

Former England star recalls his career



The club and supporters organise the concert

CHRISTMAS carols and tales from a former professional footballer were the order of the night at Keys Park as the Pitmen's now annual carol concert took place in front of a capacity audience.

The concert, now in its third year, is run in a partnership between the club and the Hednesford Town Football Club Supporters Association.

This year saw former West Bromwich Albion and England star Cyrille Regis in attendance as he spoke about his football career as well as the work he has undertaken for Christians in Sport.

Throughout the evening, which was hosted by club chaplain Rev Paul Kelly, a bible reading was undertaken by physio Gavin Blackwell, while club

Football

captain Tom Thorley recited a Christmas message with football references.

They were joined by the St Peter's School steel pan band, handbell ringers from St Peter's Church, Olivia Crane with a Christmas acapella solo, and a Staffordshire University Academy musical duo before the night was rounded off by Hednesford Salvation Army.

The evening, which was attended by more than 100 people, is set to be broadcast on Cannock Chase Radio at 10am on Christmas Day.

Hayes fight all the way to earn draw

Stafford Town 4 Heath Hayes 4
HONOURS were even in this Christmas cracker of a game. Managerless Hayes were severely depleted through injuries and had three players making their debuts from the under-21 side in what was probably their youngest line-up ever.

Hayes got off to a great start when Joe Hartshorne finished off a fine five-man move to give them a fourth-minute lead. But from then on the half belonged to Town who fired in three quick goals from Dan Jones (2) and Tom Degg.

Degg got the fourth within a couple of minutes of the restart but the game turned dramatically when James McGrady rifled home a 20-yard volley on his debut for the goal of the game.

Suddenly, Hayes started to believe in themselves. They were now in total command and battered the home goal. Charlie Ware fired home the third and right at the death Kieran Nelson bundled home the equaliser to give Hayes an unexpected share of the spoils.

Hayes are at home to Pelsall Villa on December 27.

Chasetown 0 Leek Town 3
Chasetown suffered their third consecutive defeat in the Evo-Stik League First Division South after Leek goalkeeper Ben Chapman made some match-winning saves. Leek opened the scoring in the 17th minute. Neat build-up play involving Danny Smith and Tim Grice was finished off by James Curley.

Just short of the hour, the visitors doubled their lead through Jordan Johnson. Chasetown had an opportunity to reduce the deficit after Mike Williams was pushed over by a Leek defender, but James Dance put his spot-kick over the bar. Tim Gri to increase the visitors' lead.

Chasetown are at Stocksbridge Steels on Boxing Day and entertain Rushden & Diamonds on December 29.

United demonstrate their determination

Whittington 1 Cannock United 4
CANNOCK controlled the game in a very professional and determined manner. From the off they commanded possession and dictated the pace.

Grant McCarty delivered the perfect ball for Ralph Clarke to score his debut goal after nine minutes.

This was quickly added to as McCarty delivered again on 11 minutes and Clarke placed the ball home.

Alex Scott on 19 minutes added to Cannock's tally. Whittington pulled one back after 23 minutes but any thoughts of a comeback were flattened by McCarty on 27 minutes.

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Kettley, Telford.
Thursday, December 22, 2016



PITMEN SUFFER FESTIVE FRIGHT

Grantham 4 Hednesford Town 1
THERE was little festive cheer for Hednesford Town supporters as they watched their side fall to a 4-1 loss against a rampant Grantham Town side.

The first chances of this Evo-Stik Premier encounter would fall to the Pitmen with striker Spencer Weir-Daley seeing a shot saved in the second minute before another effort flashed just wide five minutes later.

This kicked the home side into life and after Dan Crane had made a fine save in the Pitmen goal, Rhys Lewis blazed the rebound over the bar before Kyle Rowley cleared an effort off the line in a hectic couple of minutes inside the Hednesford penalty area.

Despite these close calls, it would be Hednesford that would strike first in the 21st minute when Dan Brennan headed the ball into the net from a Jamie Sheldon corner.

Alert

The lead would last just 14 minutes though as the lively Luke Shaw picked out Danny Meadows at the back post with his downwards header bringing his side level.

Three minutes later, things went from bad to worse as Shaw broke the Hednesford offside trap and slid the ball home from just inside the box.

Grantham got into their stride once again with Crane having to be alert to make a smart save just past the hour-mark.

That was a warning of what was to come though as the home side added a third goal in the 74th minute when Shaw got to the byline and his ball across the goal picked out Jeremiah Dasaolu who was able to fire home into an unguarded net.

Three minutes later it was all over as Brennan mishit a clearance onto his own crossbar and the ball fell kindly for Lee Shaw to head into the net from a yard out. Although that was to be the end of the scoring, it wouldn't be the end of the action with Crane having to rush from his goal to deny Shaw a fifth.

The Pitmen were entertaining Burton Albion on Tuesday night in the Staffs Senior Cup and travel to Stafford Rangers on Boxing Day (3pm).

School handed part of £45k deal



Danielle Goffe-Wood, marketing manager at Cameron Homes, with pupils from Chase Terrace Technology College, one of the first schools to benefit from the sponsorship deal

CAMERON Homes has announced a record-breaking sports sponsorship package.

The Chasetown-based company, which develops housing schemes across the Midlands, has pledged £45,000 to boost girls' handball.

The three-year deal will support the development of the sport in schools and clubs and follows an initial £25,000 sponsorship programme. The new package is the largest non-government backed investment in British handball and will be used to run courses at 20 schools in the West Midlands, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire.

The funding will also help support two female clubs - Olympia Cannock and Sutton

Coldfield-based B73 Handball. Nenad Popovic, who runs ScoreUK, the consultancy running the sports programme, said: "This is a tremendous commitment by Cameron Homes."

Ian Burns, managing director of Cameron Homes, said "With the very best coaches on board, and new equipment, we are sure that the scheme will have a major impact on female sport in the region."

John Swannell, head of physical education at Chase Terrace Technology College, which is one of the first schools to benefit, said: "I look forward to the development of girls' handball over the next three years and all the benefits this will bring to our students."

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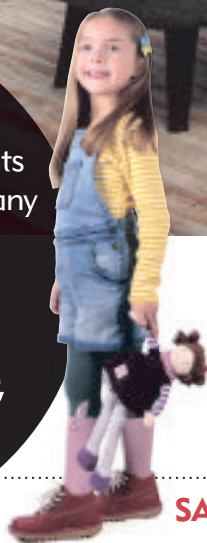
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